United Nations A/58/PV.42

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

42nd plenary meeting
Thursday, 23 October 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 15

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(a) Election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council

The President: The General Assembly will now proceed to the election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2003.

The five outgoing non-permanent members are the following: Bulgaria, Cameroon, Guinea, Mexico and the Syrian Arab Republic. Those five States cannot be re-elected. Their names, therefore, should not appear on the ballot papers.

Apart from the five permanent members, the Security Council will include in the year 2004 the following States: Angola, Chile, Germany, Pakistan and Spain. The names of those States, therefore, should also not appear on the ballot papers.

Of the five non-permanent members that will remain in office in the year 2004, two are from Africa and Asia, one is from Latin America and the Caribbean and two are from Western Europe and other States.

Consequently, pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 1991 A (XVIII) of 17 December 1963, the five non-permanent members should be elected according to the following pattern: three from Africa and Asia, one from Eastern Europe and one from Latin America and the Caribbean. The ballot papers reflect that pattern.

In accordance with established practice, there is an understanding to the effect that, of the three States to be elected from Africa and Asia, two should be from Africa and one from Asia.

I should also like to inform the Assembly that those candidates, their number not exceeding the number of seats to be filled, that receive the greatest number of votes and a two-thirds majority of those present and voting will be declared elected. In the case of a tie vote for a remaining seat, there will be a restricted ballot limited to those candidates who have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations.

Regarding candidatures, I have been informed by the Chairmen of the respective regional groups of the following.

For the three vacant seats from among the African and Asian States, there are three endorsed candidates, namely, Algeria, Benin and the Philippines. For the vacant seat from among the Eastern European States, there is one endorsed candidate, namely,

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03-57573 (E)

Romania. For the vacant seat from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, there is one endorsed candidate, namely, Brazil.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the election by secret ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

I should like to seek the usual cooperation of representatives during the time of the conduct of the elections. Please be reminded that during the voting process all campaigning should cease in the General Assembly Hall. That means, in particular, that once the meeting has begun, no more campaign material can be distributed inside the Hall. I intend to follow that to the letter. All representatives are also required to remain in their seats so that the voting process can proceed in an orderly manner. I would also seek the Assembly's cooperation and support regarding cellular phones. Please put them on "vibrate" if you feel you must have them on. It is very disconcerting, when we are in the middle of serious business, to hear those phones sound off. I thank you for your cooperation.

We shall now begin the voting process.

Ballot papers marked "A", "B" and "C" will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers that have been distributed.

May I ask representatives to write on the ballot papers marked "A", for the African and Asian States, the names of the three States for which they wish to vote; on the ballot papers marked "B", for the Eastern European States, the name of the one State for which they wish to vote; and on the ballot papers marked "C", for the Latin American and Caribbean States, the name of the one State for which they wish to vote.

A ballot paper containing more names from the relevant region than the number of seats assigned to it will be declared invalid. Names of Member States on a ballot paper that do not belong to that region will not be counted.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Alice Zaunschirm (Austria), Mr. Yusuf Mammedaliyev (Azerbaijan), Mr. Alfred Moungara-Moussotsi (Gabon), Mrs. Luisa Fernanda Bonilla Galvão de Queiroz (Guatemala), Mr. Philippe Worré (Luxembourg) and Mr. Ali Al-Darmaki (Oman) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The President: I now suspend the meeting for thirty minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.

The President: Before announcing the result of the voting, I would like to clarify that, in accordance with Article 19 of the Charter and resolution 58/1, of 16 October 2003, two Member States were not given ballot papers.

The result of the voting is as follows:

Group A — African and Asian States

Number of ballot papers:	182
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	182
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	182
Required two-thirds majority:	122
Number of votes obtained:	
Benin	181
Philippines	179
Algeria	178
Republic of Korea	1

Group B — Eastern European States

Number of ballot papers:	182
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	182
Abstentions:	7
Number of members voting:	175
Required two-thirds majority:	117
Number of votes obtained:	
Romania	174
Poland	1

Group C — Latin American and Caribbean States

Number of ballot papers:	182
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	182
Abstentions	4
Number of members voting:	178
Required two-thirds majority:	119

Number of votes obtained:

Brazil	177
Argentina	1

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority, the following States were elected members of the Security Council for a two-year term beginning 1 January 2004: Algeria, Benin, Brazil, the Philippines and Romania.

The President: I congratulate the States that have been elected members of the Security Council, and I sincerely thank the tellers for their assistance in the election.

We have thus concluded our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 15.

Programme of work

The President: I would like to remind representatives that on Monday, 27 October 2003, the Assembly will consider the cluster of items concerning the revitalization of the General Assembly, restructuring and reform. The Deputy Secretary-General will present an introduction at the beginning of the meeting. There are over 45 speakers inscribed to speak on the items. I appeal to members to consider putting forward suggestions and to participate personally at that meeting. I would also appeal to members to limit their statements to seven minutes.

Agenda item 160 (*continued*)

Global road safety crisis

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/228)

Draft resolution (A/58/L.3)

Mr. Tan (Singapore): As we have just elected five members of the Security Council, I would like, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate the five countries concerned.

At the outset, with regard to the agenda item entitled "Global road safety crisis", I would like to express our appreciation to the delegation of Oman for its efforts to bring that growing crisis to the world's attention.

Singapore welcomes this opportunity to discuss the growing road safety crisis. Motor vehicles have become such an efficient and convenient mode of transportation, as well as an essential part of our everyday lives in some form or other, that we often forget that these high-velocity, moving lumps of metal and plastic are also lethal weapons and, indeed — as some delegations have noted — weapons of mass destruction. Every year we pay a very heavy toll in human lives for that convenience.

According to the report (A/58/228) of the Secretary-General on the global road safety crisis, an estimated 1.26 million people worldwide died as a result of road traffic injuries in the year 2000. Road traffic injuries accounted for 2.2 per cent of global mortality, and were responsible for 25 per cent of all deaths due to injury. Also in the year 2000, road traffic crashes ranked as the ninth leading cause of death. The World Health Organization's (WHO) projections suggest that by 2020 road traffic injuries will overtake HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria to rank third among the causes of death and disability. Furthermore, the burden of road traffic injuries falls disproportionately on people in low- and middle-income countries.

Apart from the death toll and human cost, the approximate worldwide financial cost of road accidents is estimated at $500 billion. That is larger than the annual gross domestic product (GDP) of many small- and medium-sized economies. It is further estimated that the amount spent on repair work, medical assistance, investigations and other expenses incurred by accidents adds up to approximately 2 per cent of the GDP of developing countries annually. That is twice the total overseas development assistance provided to those countries.

In addition, the social cost of this growing crisis cannot be measured in dollars and cents. Happy families end up grieving over the untimely demise of loved ones or because of those traumatized for life. Formerly productive citizens become paralyzed or are marginalized from the workforce. Innocent children become orphaned, often owing to preventable circumstances, and face a lifetime of hardship and adversity.

We, the international community, have been remiss in not recognizing this escalating trend sooner. That is why Singapore values Oman's initiative. The WHO's decision to designate "Road safety" as the theme of World Health Day in 2004 is an important but long-overdue step in the right direction. It is only with

greater awareness that we can start to address the crisis individually and collectively.

As the Secretary-General's report notes, it is a sad fact that more than one third of road traffic deaths in 2000 — that is 435,000 deaths — occurred in South-East Asia. In other words, more than one third of the total road traffic deaths in the world occurred in a region with only 8 per cent of the world's population. Clearly more needs to be done to reverse this highly disturbing trend in our region.

Domestically, the Singapore Government has taken numerous steps in the last two decades to improve road safety in Singapore, based, as some of our fellow representatives have mentioned, on the "three Es" approach to road safety — engineering, enforcement and education.

In the area of engineering, experts from Singapore's Land Transport Authority regularly conduct road safety inspections to ensure that road conditions meet the highest standards of maintenance. Several engineering initiatives — such as alignment markers, crash cushions, bus-stop bollards and vibra-lines to warn drivers driving too close to the edge of the road — have also been implemented to improve road safety.

Enforcement also plays an important role in improving road safety. The enforcement of traffic rules is necessary to stop reckless and irresponsible road users from causing accidents and harm to others. Irresponsible road users face fines, suspension from driving and even jail terms.

Ultimately, however, education is the only guarantee for the long-term improvement in road safety. Education is crucial in creating responsible road users. For instance, anti-smoking campaigns are a good example of how effective a focused public education campaign can be in changing mindsets. Similarly, relying on inventive and catchy slogans, we should consider such approaches to educate members of the general public on their responsibilities as road users.

As part of the continuing process of educating road users on their responsibilities, various public education campaigns, events and programmes on road safety have been organized to reach out to all road users, be they drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists or pedestrians. Positive road habits are also reinforced through annual events, such as road safety outreach and anti-drink-and-drive and road courtesy campaigns.

With the "three Es" approach, Singapore has been able to bring about a steady drop in the number of fatalities and serious accidents over the past two decades. Last year, our fatality rate of 4.8 per cent per 100,000 people was the second lowest in 29 years. Any road accident that causes death or serious injury, however, is still one road accident too many. We can and will work together to further reduce this figure.

Singapore also welcomes opportunities to share experiences and learn from the best practices of others. We have done much through consultations and briefings on road safety education with visitors from such countries as China, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Viet Nam and India. We have also made contributions at such forums as the seminar series of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) known as the Global Road Safety Partnership; the Road Safety Experts Group Meetings of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum; and the recent Asian Development Bank/ASEAN Road Safety Programme Workshop in Singapore. We will continue to cooperate fully with the international community in combating this problem.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore the seriousness of the problem with another simple illustration. At the current rate of deaths from road traffic accidents, more than 10 people will have died and 30 others been injured in the short duration of my speech.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): I join Singapore in congratulating the five newly elected non-permanent members of the Security Council. We should also like to extend our appreciation to Oman for bringing this issue to the attention of the international community and for introducing the draft resolution before us, which we believe calls for all our support.

Agenda item 160, "Global road safety crisis", aptly reflects the concerns confronting all nations and the enormous costs imposed by road traffic injuries in terms of mortality, mobility and social and economic costs. Road accidents are the leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 44; 1.26 million people were killed on the roads in the year 2000. That is equivalent to 2.2 per cent of global mortality. The World Health Organization (WHO) projects that road traffic injuries

could rank third among causes of death and disability by the year 2020.

The statistics contained in document A/58/228 are consistent with these projections. Sadly, most of the deaths and fatal injuries could be preventable if suitable intervention were developed. While the primary responsibilities in this connection lie with Member States, we agree with the Secretary-General that there is a need for investment and partnerships to be fostered between the Member States and the United Nations system in sharing knowledge, best practices, lessons learned and resources. Regional coordination and cooperation will once again prove effective, especially in assisting developing countries, particularly those facing unique challenges, such as small island developing States, like my own country, Fiji.

In thanking the Secretary-General for his report, we rely on his coordination in forging ahead on such cooperation and partnerships, using all avenues that are at his disposal. We recognize in this connection the efforts of the WHO in designating the theme "Road safety" for the observance of World Health Day on 7 April 2004, as well as the launching of the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*. These efforts need all our full support to ensure that our sacred aims are realized. The *Report* calls on nations to enact programmes and initiatives to arrest the runaway statistics of the carnage on our roads. All these initiatives are well-meaning and hope to do as much they can. However, money is always a prohibitive factor. We count on the United Nations to assist us, as we have already alluded to.

Domestically, the Fiji National Road Safety Council was established by an act of Parliament in 1995. It is tasked with enhancing the safety of all road users. Educating road users has been a hallmark of the Council's campaign to cover rural and urban areas of Fiji. The campaign has also covered road users of different groups, schools, drivers and passengers in the use of all kinds of roads. The Council has enjoyed much success over the years, as indicated by the reduction in our road accident figures. Ideally, we would like achieve an accident rate of zero. However difficult this may be, the work of prevention will have to be relentless, continuous and versatile if it is to be interesting and eye-catching. The success of the National Road Safety Council is a result of the partnership between Government and the Council, on the one hand, and Mobil Oil, other oil companies and public support, on the other.

Our region has made innovative progress in promoting road safety procedures. The State of Victoria, Australia, has been assisting the Fiji police in the use of speed guns and providing equipment in teaching road safety. The Asian Development Bank has provided soft loans to help the Council further in realizing its designated responsibilities.

The high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly scheduled for 14 April 2004 can be attended, we trust, at the highest level possible to give the day proper recognition and to give substance to all the planned programmes and the development of road safety initiatives. It is our view that a lot of assistance is already available; the problem is making known the assistance that can help reduce our road safety figures. Fiji intends to persevere in its road safety programmes and is willing to assist other programmes, if wanted.

Mr. Gilman (United States of America): The United States fully supports the initiative addressing the global issue of traffic safety in the United Nations system and welcomes the opportunity to work with Member States on the most efficient and effective way to coordinate the exchange of information and the development of the best road traffic safety practices. The issue of road safety holds a prominent place in our national and international agendas.

At the national level, while the United States was able to reduce its annual traffic-related fatalities from 55,000 in the late 1960s to 42,000 last year, the fatality rate is still stagnant and the associated societal and economic costs continue to be too high at $230 billion a year. Moreover, we cannot be complacent about the annual deaths of some 42,000 United States citizens or simply accept that significant loss as an unavoidable part of living in a heavily-motorized society. Through this initiative, we look forward to learning from other nations about their successful strategies and we hope to offer some of our own.

At the international level, we have stepped up our activities to address traffic safety issues through our participation in the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety within the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). That group is the only existing United Nations working group that can appropriately respond to the call for action on this draft resolution.

The United States strongly believes that any coordinated initiatives to address the problem of global road safety should be managed within the existing UNECE Working Party. The infrastructure and technical expertise are in place and the UNECE's mandate is inclusive of non-European countries, including developing economies. We strongly recommend that the Chairman of the Working Party and its Secretariat be present at the 14 April plenary meetings in order to discuss how all of us can collectively use the Working Party's mandate to its fullest extent.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Geleta (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): At the outset, I should like on behalf of our organization to congratulate the newly elected members of the Security Council. As we debate this somewhat sad theme today, and given the speed with which we lose people on the roads, I wonder, as some colleagues have done, whether this theme may not become a Security Council issue some months from now.

At any rate, I should like to start by saying that this theme is of very deep concern to our organization, not only in the secretariat in Geneva, but also worldwide. In many cases, as the Assembly knows, Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteers are the first to reach road crash sites, where they provide first aid, psychological support and ambulance services. We do this on a daily basis for crash victims in communities around the world. These communities and our volunteers are deeply affected by the preventable tragedies they encounter every day. They strongly believe that this particular crisis, or disaster, if you like, can be drastically reduced. We therefore welcome the attention being given to this issue by the General Assembly and trust that it will lead to concerted action at the regional and national levels to address the issues identified in the Secretary-General's report.

The statistics are so grim that I will not bother the Assembly with terrifying figures, since previous colleagues have covered these. I am sure, however, that many saw yesterday's BBC report informing us that, in just one of our beautiful European countries alone, on average 100 people die every day on the roads. No comment is needed, I believe.

As early as 1998, we were already raising the alarm. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) published a study on traffic accidents in its *World Disasters Report*. This study asked an unpleasant question: Must millions more die from traffic accidents before we act much faster? The central message here is that action needs to be taken by all of us — Governments, the private sector, civil society and the public at large — to deal with this disaster.

In 1999, during the International Conference of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, Governments and our national organizations committed themselves to a plan of action to respond to this growing problem through the further development of road safety measures, in partnership with other stakeholders. The implementation of the plan of action leaves a lot to be desired, particularly given the growing scale of this crisis.

IFRC strongly supports the actions undertaken by many of our national societies and, to a certain extent, expects more from our partners, the Governments. Although we are aware that each Government, however constrained it may be in skills, technology and resources, engages in road safety programmes, only six responded to the requirements of General Assembly resolution 57/309, according to the Secretary-General's report. However, we would like to make special note of Oman, Austria and Ethiopia, which have mounted active road safety campaigns in collaboration with their national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

Another very valuable illustration of collaboration is the European Red Cross road safety campaign, organized by 26 European national organizations and strongly supported by the European Commission. It is an active and powerful campaign, originally launched in 2002 and hosted by the German Red Cross. It works and it saves lives.

We recognize that partnerships are a prerequisite to the achievement of real progress in addressing this crisis. For our part, we are particularly pleased with the partnership that has been developed to bring together our resources with the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and, very importantly, the World Bank, the World Health

Organization (WHO) and the private sector. The result was the formation in 1999 of the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP), which is hosted at our headquarters in Geneva. It is an active global partnership dedicated to the improvement of road safety, especially in developing countries, through the sharing of information and experience.

The partnership between the United Nations and the WHO in the production of reports and documentation for this debate is most welcome. We look forward to that institutional collaboration being taken to a new level in 2004, when World Health Day — 7 April — will have road safety as its theme. We and the Global Road Safety Partnership are working actively with the WHO and the World Bank on the preparation of the key document, the World report on road traffic injury prevention, to be launched on that day. As part of that theme, we urge all Governments to open dialogue with their national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to prepare for effective events to mark World Health Day and to support sustainable partnerships with both civil society and the private sector to address national road safety issues.

Furthermore, the IFRC will, through its first-aid work, take every appropriate opportunity to strengthen the capacity of communities to address the crisis we are discussing today. In many respects, the work of the Red Cross and Red Crescent on first aid provides the most human interface between the aforementioned sad statistics of the crisis and its impact on ordinary people. As the Assembly may be aware, in many European countries, it is compulsory that everyone pass a Red Cross first-aid course and examination before receiving a driver's license. We shall also work to ensure that these activities and the proposed high-level United Nations debate next April are built into the coordinated work to be carried out within the multilateral family.

In conclusion, to rephrase an old American saying, all roads are paved with good intentions. Let us work together to make those intentions a reality.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that, at the request of the sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.3, action on the draft resolution will be taken at a later date, to be announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*.

Agenda item 50 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/359)

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/29 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the Observer for Partners in Population and Development.

Mr. Singh (Partners in Population and Development): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for giving us this opportunity to offer a few remarks in relation to agenda item 50 on behalf of the Partners in Population and Development.

First, let me say a few words about the Partners in Population and Development. As many members know, the Partners in Population and Development came into existence during the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) as an intergovernmental alliance of developing countries with a record of substantial success in reproductive health and population programmes and with a commitment to share with other developing countries their knowledge and experience. It now comprises 19 countries representing 54 per cent of the world population. During the ICPD+5 process, in 1999, the General Assembly specifically recognized the Partners as a major South-South initiative, and last year, as was mentioned, we were granted Permanent Observer status, which we hope to utilize to work closely with various United Nations agencies and programmes involved in population and development.

The four major areas covered by the Partners are family planning and reproductive health, maternal mortality and morbidity, issues concerning adolescents, and HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. The modalities that have been used to focus on those themes are policy dialogues, training, research and the dissemination of information, particularly on best practices and lessons learned. We work closely with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other United Nations agencies involved in population and development. In our view, the work that we do contributes to the furtherance and strengthening of South-South cooperation, which was one of the major

points in the Programme of Action of the 1994 Cairo Conference and which, we believe, is one of the major elements of the promotion of future cooperation among all countries in relation to strengthening the capacities of countries in the South.

The main topic we wish to touch upon here is integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. We agree that reviews and appraisals of the major United Rations conferences and summits should assess the progress made in the implementation of the commitments and provide an occasion to reaffirm the goals and objectives agreed at those conferences and summits, share best practices and lessons learned, and identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them and important measures for the further implementation of their programmes of action, as well as new challenges and emerging issues.

We expect that the ICPD+10 review — or the Cairo plus 10 review — in which we are particularly interested, will proceed fully along those lines. We look forward to the country-level assessment of progress and constraints in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action undertaken by the UNFPA. That assessment should give us valuable insights into what progress has been achieved towards the goals and objectives of the ICPD and what further action needs to be undertaken to achieve those goals by the year 2015. We also await with interest the outcomes of the regional meetings organized by the regional commissions, as well as the initiatives taken by civil society organizations.

Though it seems clear that no global intergovernmental conference on population and development will take place in 2004, we believe that at all levels — national, regional and international — various opportunities within and outside the United Nations will be used to refocus worldwide attention on themes and issues relating to further implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, with particular attention to the issue of resource mobilization. We also believe that, if it is decided to organize a major meeting in 2005 to examine implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, issues related to population and development will form part of the agenda of such a meeting.

We see a clear relationship between the Millennium Development Goals and the ICPD goals and objectives. We fully share the view of the Secretary-General, expressed on many occasions, that the overall Millennium Goals of poverty eradication and gender equality are closely linked to the goals adopted by the ICPD in 1994; I refer in particular to those relating to reproductive health and population. We know that the UNFPA has already done a considerable amount of work on that topic. I wish to inform members that it is our intention to organize a number of policy dialogues, involving policy-makers and programme managers, on various aspects of this integral relationship. We hope that the outcomes of those dialogues, which will be published in the form of monographs, will contribute to continuing discussion on how such links between population themes and the Millennium Development Goals are to be established at the operational level.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 15.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.43

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

43rd plenary meeting
Monday, 27 October 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Agenda item 60 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/58/L.5)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held its debate on this agenda item, together with agenda item 10, at the 23rd to 27th plenary meetings on 6, 7 and 9 October 2003. In connection with this item, the General Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/58/L.5.

I give the floor to the representative of China to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.5.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.5, entitled "Enhancing capacity-building in global public health", under agenda item 60.

To halt and to begin to reverse, by 2015, the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases is one of the development goals set down in the Millennium Declaration. To achieve such a goal, the international community needs to pay greater attention to capacity-building in global public health. The outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in certain countries and regions in the first half of the year once again demonstrated that public health has become a global issue, which requires global cooperation. Only by enhancing the capacity of the international community to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases and by boosting national capacity-building in public health can there be a solid basis for development and prosperity in all countries. With that in mind, the Chinese delegation has taken the initiative of submitting the draft resolution entitled "Enhancing capacity-building in global public health".

The main elements of this draft resolution include recalling the Millennium Declaration adopted by heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit and the development goals contained therein, in particular the health-related development goals; recognizing that the globalization of trade and increased international travel have increased the risk of the rapid worldwide spread of infectious diseases, posing new challenges to public health; noting with concern the deleterious impact on humankind of various major infectious diseases and epidemics, especially the heavy burden they impose on the developing countries; welcoming the current success of the affected countries in combating severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS); emphasizing the need for greater international and regional cooperation to meet new and existing challenges to public health; welcoming the efforts of the World Health Organization and other United Nations bodies, as well as the private sector and civil society, aimed at enhancing capacity-building in global public health and at promoting public health at the country level.

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03-58083 (E)

In the operative part, the draft urges Member States to further integrate public health into their national economic and social development strategies and consistently improve their public health systems; calls upon Member States and the international community to raise public awareness of good public health practices, including through education and the mass media; calls for the improvement of global public health preparedness and response systems, including systems of prevention and monitoring of infectious diseases; invites the regional social and economic commissions to cooperate closely with Member States in their capacity-building in public health; encourages United Nations agencies, bodies, funds and programmes to continue to address public health concerns in their development activities and programmes and to actively support capacity-building in global public health; and requests the Secretary-General to include observations on the issue of enhancing capacity-building in global public health in his report on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

During the consultations on this draft resolution, delegations put forward many constructive ideas and proposals that further enriched the draft resolution and made it more comprehensive. I am confident that the adoption of this draft resolution by the General Assembly will not only inspire Member States to give higher priority to capacity-building in public health, but also to play an important role in achieving the development goals set in the Millennium Declaration.

Before the text was issued, 120 countries joined in the sponsorship of this draft resolution. Now, another 24 countries have joined in sponsorship — Albania, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Estonia, Fiji, Gabon, Haiti, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Liechtenstein, Maldives, Mauritania, Monaco, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Seychelles, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uruguay and Uzbekistan. Please allow me to express, on behalf of the Chinese Government, our sincere thanks to all those countries that have shown interest and given their support. We hope that this draft resolution can be adopted by consensus.

The President: I call on the representative of Morocco, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Arrouchi (Morocco): I would like, on behalf of the Group of 77 (G-77), to thank the delegation of China for having introduced this very important draft resolution on enhancing capacity-building in global public health. We fully support this initiative, as it will help the international community to further enhance capacity-building of global public health. This initiative will also contribute to the promotion of further implementation of the outcome of the Millennium Summit, particularly in reinforcing national public health infrastructures to face new challenges posed by deadly diseases worldwide. From the special session on HIV/AIDS, we know that the number of infected persons has increased from 36 million to 40 million, the majority of who are in Africa.

We look forward to a unanimous and enthusiastic decision by the General Assembly on this very important draft resolution.

Mr. Shamanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Regarding the draft resolution on capacity-building and global public health, we would like to point out the following.

At the crossroads of this twentieth and twenty-first century, public health has become a priority on the international agenda. The international community's consensus was reflected in a number of fundamental documents in recent times, including the Millennium Declaration and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In achieving sustainable development and eradicating poverty, protecting public health and strengthening national health services have taken on increasingly important roles, first of all as factors for the promotion and implementation of those objectives and secondly as indicators of the social and economic sustainability of society.

From this standpoint, we regard positively the Chinese-sponsored draft to enhance capacity-building in global public health and based on what we feel to be its great timeliness, we were one of the first sponsors. The principle importance of the document is that it does not focus on just one of the individual aspects of public health, but draws the attention of the international community to the strengthening of social public health services as the basic machinery. Major emphasis is put on the improvement of the systems for prevention and monitoring infectious diseases and for

establishing partnerships among Governments, organizations and institutions of the United Nations system and international financial institutions, as well as the private sector and other representatives of civil society.

We would like to highlight with satisfaction the successful work of our Chinese colleagues on coming to an agreement on the draft. Evidence of this is the great number of sponsors for this document. We hope that it can adopted by consensus and we believe that the adoption of this resolution will give further important momentum to international cooperation for the purpose of carrying out the tasks of public health and sustainable development.

Mr. Cardoso (Brazil): Let me convey my congratulations to the Chinese delegation for such an opportune and important initiative. Brazil was very pleased to be one of the sponsors at a very early stage of the consultations.

We note with satisfaction, out of the many important issues raised by this draft (A/58/L.5), a reference to the World Trade Organization (WTO) General Council's recent decision on the implementation of paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) and public health. This is a life-saving decision that allows poorer countries to deal with diseases that devastate their people. The overwhelming majority of people suffering from infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, are in developing countries.

We attach great importance to health related issues. This year we will bring to the attention of the Third Committee initiatives already taken in the Commission on Human Rights on the universal right to enjoy the highest possible standard of physical and mental health and on access to medications in the context of pandemics such a as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

If we are to attain the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the health related Development Goals, we must persevere in enhancing capacity-building in global public health, especially in developing countries.

Mr. Nambiar (India): The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals of reducing child mortality, of improving maternal health and of combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases necessarily requires capacity-building in public health on a global basis.

Furthermore, ill health undermines economic development and impedes efforts to reduce poverty. Capacity-building in public health is in fact essential for economic growth and the achievement of the seven Development Goals of the Millennium Declaration.

India is happy to be associated with this draft resolution as a sponsor. We thank China for the initiative that they have taken.

In the context of the Development Goals adopted by the United Nations, it is important that the Organization also recognizes its close and direct link with public health. Not to do so would constitute a serious shortcoming in the details of any viable strategy for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Member States of the United Nations have the primary responsibility for building and strengthening their public health capacities. The draft resolution recognizes, however, that the magnitude of the challenge may be beyond the capabilities of many developing countries. We are pleased to see in the draft an emphasis on the importance of active international cooperation. The report that the Secretary-General will give to us at the next session will, we expect, help us further address this matter.

The Commission on Macroeconomics and Health had, in its 2001 report, provided an approach to the development cooperation goal of the Millennium Declaration. We recognize that there has been movement, albeit somewhat limited, on its recommendations. We are happy that India, particularly through its pharmaceutical manufacturing capabilities, has been able to make a contribution. We hope that this draft resolution will encourage further effort in the direction recommended by the Commission. We join China in expressing appreciation for the positive and constructive spirit of the consultations held on this draft and also look forward to its adoption by consensus.

Mr. Cumberbach Miguén (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like join other speakers in thanking the Chinese delegation for having introduced this initiative, of which my country has been a sponsor since its introduction.

Meeting here, our heads of State and Government proposed in the Millennium Summit Declaration that we enhance our citizens' health, one of many other goals furthering the development of our peoples.

In this context, Cuba thinks that it is essential to promote at the global level international cooperation activities that will lead to creating capacities and promoting public health, particularly in the third world. We are convinced that the draft resolution entitled "Enhancing capacity-building in global public health" (A/58/L.5) is an additional step forward in this direction. We would like to reiterate once again that our country will continue to support all international efforts in the health area to combat the evils afflicting the international community.

Mr. Mekprayoonthong (Thailand): My delegation wishes to express our appreciation to China for its important initiative to present this draft resolution for consideration by the General Assembly.

The emergence of new epidemics in the twenty-first century has called for collective action from the international community on the basis of shared responsibilities. Thailand hosted the special meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders and China in Bangkok in April 2003 to encourage strong political commitment and strengthen cooperation in order to contain severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

The success in combating severe acute respiratory syndrome has proven that regional and international cooperation are vital to cope with the common threat of infectious diseases. In that regard, Thailand joins other countries in sponsoring this draft resolution and looks forward to its adoption by consensus. My delegation believes that adoption of this draft resolution will lead to significant enhancement of capacity-building in global public health. That is crucial for the strengthening of global capacity to contain this common threat to our peoples.

Mr. Andrabi (Pakistan): One of the greatest challenges that humanity faces in the twenty-first century is the spread of infectious diseases, both emerging and re-emerging. Although the exact sources of many new diseases are still being researched, the phenomenon of globalization — people coming into closer contact with other people — has permitted a jump of infectious agents across borders. This has given a global complexion to the problem. It needs a global response.

Infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria have devastated millions of people. The process of development in countries afflicted by those diseases has come to a grinding halt. These epidemics have rolled back decades of progress and prosperity with their devastating effect. Public health has therefore acquired a very prominent place on the development agenda. Economic growth and social development must go hand in hand, and the two need to complement each other.

Reversing the spread of major diseases by the end of 2015 is one of the development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. Last year, a new epidemic — severe acute respiratory syndrome — broke out in more than 30 countries and regions, causing over 800 deaths and more than 8,000 cases of infection. Its outbreak and spread pose a threat to public health undertakings. The fact that its cause remains unknown heightens the level of threat. We commend the efforts made by China and other affected countries to take effective measures not only to combat the epidemic, but also to control its spread. However, it has become quite clear that, without effective international cooperation, such problems cannot be effectively dealt with.

This calls for closer international cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual respect and benefit. Special attention needs to be paid to the establishment and improvement of the global contingency reaction mechanism. Simultaneously, the ability to respond effectively to such major health disasters also needs to be enhanced. The United Nations system, therefore, needs to consider integrating public health issues into its activities and programmes. The aim should be to further strengthen the capacity of Member States and to facilitate international cooperation in public health.

Against that backdrop, we consider the Chinese draft resolution (A/58/L.5) a timely initiative and a major step in the right direction. We thank China for its efforts to draft a consensus resolution with broad sponsorship. Pakistan has fully supported this initiative since its inception and has joined in sponsoring the draft resolution. Adoption of this draft resolution by the General Assembly would enable the international community to effectively help developing countries develop their economies, improve the level of health

care and reduce the probability of the outbreak of diseases.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/58/L.5, entitled "Enhancing capacity-building in global public health".

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/58/L.5, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Eritrea, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Israel, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine and Venezuela.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.5?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 58/3).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 60.

Agenda items 55, 57, 58 and 59

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/786, A/58/175, A/58/351, A/58/382, A/58/395 and A/58/395/Corr.1)

The President: Members will recall that at the 90th plenary meeting of the fifty-seventh session, held on 18 June 2003, the General Assembly decided to defer consideration of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change: Intergovernmental review of the medium-term plan and the programme budget" (A/57/786) to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system".

The General Assembly begins discussion this morning on a cluster of reform items. Particular attention will be focused on agenda item 55, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". Delegations will also wish to pay attention to the reports of the Secretary-General under item 59, which describe the actions taken by the Secretary-General in implementation of Assembly resolution 57/300.

From the time that I was elected President in June of this year, I have considered United Nations reform to be a matter of the highest priority. As Member States may be aware, I have already begun to take practical steps to streamline the work of the Assembly and to make better use of the General Committee as a body providing coordinating and oversight advise and support to the President.

I have also begun to look into the provisions of various General Assembly resolutions that confer specific responsibilities on the President, but which may not have been implemented. Thus, for example, I provided an assessment of the debate on the report of the Security Council, an action that had been authorized by the Assembly but not implemented.

As Chairman of the Assembly Working Group on revitalization, I have a personal responsibility in respect of item 55. I also have a deep, personal commitment. The comments made by speakers in the general debate, including those made by a large number of heads of State and Government, indicate that Member States consider that the time has come for serious consideration to be given to a wide range of reform issues.

Reform and revitalization of the General Assembly figure prominently among those issues. Speaker after speaker has also reaffirmed his or her commitment to the Organization and the provisions of the Charter. Having come here and made that reaffirmation, I believe that the leaders in capitals are now looking to those of us in this Hall today to proceed from discussion to action. I trust therefore that the debate that we are about to have will reflect this approach and that speakers will seek to be straightforward and precise in expressing their views.

In order to move forward, we need to speak frankly to each other and we need to make specific proposals. Upon the conclusion of this debate, I shall announce the facilitators whom I have designated to move the process forward. I will work closely with the

facilitators and coordinate their work. I will also discuss with them a time frame for the negotiation process. I have already sought to provide a framework for action by way of the informal note that I circulated a week and a half ago, which served as a background paper to the informal open-ended plenary consultations that took place on 17 October. It seems to me that that meeting went well and helped to launch our deliberations on this item.

Before concluding, I extend a special welcome to the Women's International Forum, whose members impressed me tremendously by their interest in matters relating to the reform and revitalization of the Security Council and the General Assembly, respectively.

I now call on the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: It is a great pleasure for me to join the Assembly today to present the Secretary-General's report on implementation of his agenda for further change, contained in document A/58/351.

This is a moment when the United Nations is facing formidable challenges and wrestling with fundamental questions. The Secretary-General, in his speech to the General Assembly at the opening of the general debate, called for bold changes in order to ensure that our Organization is up to the task. At the same time, it is important not to lose sight of the practical measures and day-to-day steps that need to be taken to strengthen, adapt and otherwise equip the United Nations to meet the tests of our times.

A lot has already been achieved since the process of reform was initiated by the Secretary-General upon taking office in 1997. The Millennium Declaration that the Assembly adopted three years ago gives the world a common vision for the new century, including a set of Development Goals that now serves as a template for action by the entire international system. Through the Brahimi report and other initiatives, we have made major improvements in our capacity to deploy and manage complex peacekeeping and peace-building operations.

We have developed new mechanisms and procedures to ensure that the disparate parts of the Organization work better together both at headquarters and in the field. We have built strong new partnerships with the private sector, civil society groups and others, bringing new energies to the pursuit of our common goals. And we have stressed managerial reform more than ever before in recognition of the need to modernize our systems and our skills.

Last year, the Secretary-General introduced an "agenda for further change" that sought to build on these achievements and take into account important developments in the international arena, most notably the Millennium Declaration. The report now before the Assembly sets out what has been done to implement the new agenda and describes the steps to be taken next. It also, of course, reflects the guidance that the Assembly provided in last year's resolution. Allow me to mention a few highlights.

The budget submitted this year represents a major effort to realign activities with priorities and to increase attention to development issues, in particular the Millennium Development Goals. The Secretary-General will offer greater details tomorrow in his address to the Fifth Committee to introduce the 2004-2005 budget. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has moved forward with efforts to improve management and the services it provides. Restructuring of the Department of Public Information has taken place and the regional information centre for Western Europe will be fully operational next year. We have made major innovations in managing conferences and meetings, in particular through greater reliance on information technology.

The streamlining of reports, considered essential to better focus the work of the General Assembly, its subsidiary bodies and the Economic and Social Council, has been initiated. A number of reports on related subjects were consolidated, leading to an overall reduction during this session of approximately 20 reports from what was originally foreseen. Further progress on this front will depend in large part on decisions which the Member States can take in the context of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the integrated follow-up to conferences.

The United Nations presence in developing countries is being made more effective through simplification and harmonization of procedures, joint programming, the pooling of resources, better knowledge management and improvements in the Resident Coordinator system. A review of technical cooperation activities in key areas was carried out and is being transmitted to the Assembly in a separate report. The review identifies the various Secretariat

entities and operational agencies involved in the provision of technical cooperation in a selected number of issues, as well as areas where further clarification of roles and responsibilities will be undertaken in order to avoid duplication. It is hoped that this compendium will be a useful source of information for programme countries and the donor community.

The Panel Of Eminent Persons on United Nations Relations with Civil Society, which the Secretary-General announced in his reform report last year, was formed last February. It is chaired by the former President of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and comprises 12 members from all regions of the world. The Panel's report is expected early in the new year.

We are also continuing to make new investments in our staff through training. With the appointment of a new Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources, renewed impetus will be given to the implementation of the measures identified in the Secretary-General's report last year, particularly as regards staff mobility and career prospects for General Service staff.

Some of the reform activities I have just mentioned are covered in greater detail in complementary reports. These are identified in the report before the Assembly today and should be read in conjunction with it. While implementation is under way on all elements of the Secretary-General's reform package of last year, there is one major piece of unfinished business. I refer here to the reform of the planning and budgeting system.

The Secretary-General argued in his report last year that the process needs to be more strategic and results-oriented, and less time-consuming. He proposed changes to the format and content of the budget document. He proposed that the strategic framework for the Organization should consist of a medium-term plan covering a two-year period, combined with the budget outline. He also suggested that the Committee for Programme and Coordination shift its focus to monitoring and evaluating the work of the United Nations — critical functions that are all too often overlooked or given short shrift — rather than replicating the reviews of plans and budgets already done by other bodies.

The Assembly did not reach decisions on most of those issues last year, and requested supplementary information. That information is contained in documents A/57/786 and A/58/395. The changes proposed are not dramatic, but if adopted they would significantly improve the quality of the budget process while reducing the amount of time and the quantity of documentation that go into it. I hope that the Assembly will take a decision before the end of the year so that the changes can shape the way in which the budget for 2006-2007 is developed.

Reform is not a single, specific destination. Rather, it is a wide-ranging — indeed, an all-encompassing — journey. Ultimately it is a state of mind — an openness to new ideas and partners, a continuous search for better ways of doing our work, a commitment to excellence, a talent for focusing on what matters, an appetite for service.

All of the reforms, big and small, swift or slow, internal or intergovernmental, that have been achieved show not only that the United Nations can change, but that change is an integral part of the way we do business. Indeed, change has been our métier since our earliest days. We all look forward to wise decisions in the days ahead that will enable us to keep it so for the future.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and Australia. I also wish to associate my delegation with the statement that the Foreign Minister of Fiji will deliver on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Canada, New Zealand and Australia are convinced that the need for reform in the United Nations is more pressing than ever before. The Secretary-General is right to say that the United Nations has reached a historic fork in the road. We are encouraged by our sense that there is greater realization of this, and believe that a rare opportunity for us to act will exist this year and perhaps next year. After that, it may be too late.

Today's debate covers reform processes in several parts of the United Nations, and I will mention a few of them specifically. The common problem faced by all ideas for change in the United Nations is generating enough political will to overcome the inertia intrinsic to an Organization governed by 191 sovereign Members. Certainly, there is no lack of good reform ideas here. But a decade of labours towards revitalizing the Assembly and making the Security Council more representative has, frankly, produced few results.

The bright spot has been the leadership of the Secretary-General — ably assisted by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Fréchette — who has achieved welcome progress in modernizing and improving the Secretariat. The Brahimi peacekeeping reforms will stand as another of his achievements. The Secretary-General recently announced a new panel that will examine the policy challenges facing the Organization and the institutional structures needed to meet them. Such an examination is very timely and much needed. The panel should consult widely with Member States and be bold in its analysis and recommendations. Our delegations stand ready to contribute, and we look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's proposals next year. In the meantime, however, there is plenty that needs doing.

A year ago, the Secretary-General presented the Assembly with a fresh agenda for reform (see A/57/387). This year he has given us a progress report, submitted several detailed reports on specific proposals and requested our approval for other reforms in the 2004-2005 budget.

Resolution 57/300 broadly welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals. Since then, we have been disappointed that, whatever reform actions have been discussed, there has been resistance or opposition from one quarter or another. For instance, in the Committee on Programme and Coordination in June, every one of the reform measures proposed in the budget was criticized and efforts were mounted to block several of them.

This year, with elaborated and refined proposals before it, the Assembly needs to take decisions. Our delegations will give full support to the implementation of the Secretary-General's measures in all intergovernmental bodies.

Many proposals have now been referred to the Fifth Committee. Reform must be the abiding theme of deliberations and decisions there. The Fifth Committee has a particular responsibility to advance management and administrative reforms that make the Organization stronger and more effective.

Our delegations attach special importance to the request by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for a greater share of the regular budget. In particular, we support the new posts to strengthen the human rights treaty bodies, in line with the Secretary-General's recommendations.

The budget, planning and evaluation cycle is of critical importance to the Organization. That cycle brings together the many legislative mandates created by the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiaries, and it matches them with the finite resources available to the Organization.

The two reports before us on improvements to the current process of planning and budgeting (A/57/786 and A/58/395) offer a compelling diagnosis of flaws in the current process. Taken as a whole, the process is so protracted and burdensome that it disenfranchises the majority of Member States. The medium-term plan, as now constructed, leads to rigidity in the Secretariat's work and inhibits our ability to respond to changing circumstances. Programmes and resources are considered on separate tracks, undermining the development of results-based budgeting. Furthermore, programmatic evaluation does not feed back into the planning and budgeting cycle.

We consider that modest refinements of the process could lead to significant improvements. Our approach is based on five principles. First, the process should better support results-based budgeting; secondly, programme and resource decisions should be integrated; thirdly, Member States should be able to give strategic policy direction; fourthly, evaluation of results must be effective and affect planning; and lastly, the intergovernmental organs must spend less time on reviewing the budget.

The Secretary-General's proposals offer a way forward and a starting point for our discussions. But we will take a flexible and creative approach to finding a set of reforms that serves all of us better and makes the Organization stronger.

We welcome your efforts, Mr. President, to inject life into the process of revitalizing the General Assembly. Our delegations believe that revitalization needs to start with the second of the two areas that you have identified: improved working methods. The agenda is the core of the malaise in the Assembly. It is overloaded, outdated, highly repetitive and often of marginal relevance, even in the capitals of Member States, let alone to their peoples. As everyone knows, the Assembly spends most of its time negotiating the same resolutions, year after year.

We must start with a thorough reappraisal of the agenda. We could, for example, envisage a streamlined agenda of a limited number of items relevant in terms

of contemporary problems and challenges. Such an agenda would be established anew for each Assembly session. We need to concentrate on resolutions that are meaningful and can be implemented. At the same time, we should evaluate the committee structure and reshape it to fit a new agenda that focuses on the major issues facing the globe today.

Only by making fundamental changes to its work programme and methods can we restore the authority and prestige of the Assembly. While the biennialization of some items has helped to rationalize the agenda, that is not enough to turn the Assembly into the thriving centre of the multilateral system that it ought to be.

The revitalization process has yielded so little not because of a lack of good ideas, but because of a lack of political will. If the Assembly is going to be revitalized, then all Member States need to reassess their positions and be prepared to adapt their preferences to accommodate those of others. Without recognition by all parties of our shared interest in a productive and effective multilateral system, the Assembly will continue to wither.

The common challenge facing proposals for reform is to create political will and generate momentum. Our endeavours to make the United Nations more productive and effective assume even greater importance in this complex and daunting international environment.

Mr. Tavola (Fiji): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum that are represented at the United Nations: Australia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Fiji.

The Pacific Islands Forum comprises both developing and developed countries. We are predominantly small States. We share a strong interest in making the United Nations and its processes more efficient, because we have limited resources ourselves and because a more efficient Organization will give the United Nations greater credibility worldwide. We share a strong interest in reforms that will enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations and focus the Organization and its constituent parts on today's priorities.

The case for reform has been made and, in our view, is widely accepted. We agree with those who sense that the prospects for reform look brighter than they have in the past. We must seize the opportunity. Our task is to engage in processes that will deliver specific reforms on which we can all agree. Several reforms are under way, because reform is necessary at a number of levels.

At the highest level, we need to look at the role of our major governance organs and the relationship among them. Secondly, we need to continue work on strengthening the United Nations as an organization. Thirdly, we need to breathe new life into the General Assembly. Those areas of reform are closely linked; I will comment on each.

The Pacific Islands Forum fully supports the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a high-level panel to review the functioning of our major bodies and consider reforms to our institutions and processes. The Secretary-General rightly places that review in the context of an examination of global challenges to the United Nations, particularly — but not exclusively — challenges to peace and security. The panel should not shy away from difficult, fundamental questions. We urge all Member States to be open to the process. While many may have anxieties about the options and the potential implications of those options, we should not step away from exploring the possibilities. The panel will need to consult widely, and we look to it to provide an independent, honest and fresh assessment of where we go from here.

Last December, we adopted resolution 57/300, which goes some way towards strengthening the United Nations. Good progress has been made, but much remains to be done. Our delegations are committed and supportive of this ongoing process. The Secretary-General's progress report (A/58/351) reflects a substantive effort across a very broad range of United Nations activities, spanning human rights, the Organization's outreach to civil society and the private sector, and strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations presence in developing countries. Some of those proposals are well developed, and the ideas that underpin them are not new. We support the overall direction and leadership provided by the Secretary-General. We agree that the budget for 2004-2005 provides a good vehicle for implementing many proposals, and we shall follow these discussions very closely.

The Pacific Forum group of Member States has a particular interest in strengthening United Nations operational activities for development, and we strongly support the thrust of the Organization's work in that area. The work of the United Nations Development Group and the strengthening of the resident coordinator system have been positive developments. We strongly support continuing to improve coordination among United Nations funds and programmes, in particular through the simplification and harmonization of their work. The aim of reducing transaction costs is a particularly important one for developing countries in the Pacific, given their generally small size and the constraints on their capacity. Australia and New Zealand, as regional donors, also support that aim as a means of ensuring that contributions to United Nations development activities are used to best effect. The appointment of lead United Nations agencies to coordinate sector-wide inputs is another positive development. It could add welcome flexibility to enable United Nations agencies to work together coherently in partnership with host Governments, while at the same time reducing unnecessary duplication of reporting and other activities.

We also welcome the improved focus on post-conflict transition. That is an area where United Nations funds and programmes have provided useful input in two Pacific Islands Forum member countries, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. These ongoing reforms are important in an increasingly field-based Organization, and our delegations look forward to discussions during next year's triennial policy review of operational activities.

In the area of strengthening human rights, we welcome the recognition in the report of the importance of the role of national human rights institutions. We should also like to see better targeting of technical assistance in support of the treaty body and special procedures systems. We need to find pragmatic solutions to the demands that increased treaty body reporting and compliance place on small States.

Mr. President, the Pacific Islands Forum welcomes your own recent initiative to provide a framework for revitalization of the General Assembly. The Forum fully supports proposals that will make the General Assembly more efficient in its operation and more focused and relevant in the issues it addresses. We would emphasize that we seek changes not in order to diminish the role of the General Assembly, but in order to enhance its relevance. We recognize that, for all of us, there will be a balance between national and collective interests. But at its heart, the United Nations is about the collective good, and achieving effective collective action may require us at times to rise above national interests.

Mr. President, your informal note usefully sets out the possible areas of reform under two broad headings. You have highlighted a number of specific proposals. These and others will need to be developed and discussed. We look to the process being transparent and inclusive and welcome your intention to appoint facilitators. There is also an important role for individual committee-based discussions involving a bottom-up as well as a top-down approach.

In many ways, it is the plenary of the General Assembly that needs most attention. If debates are poorly attended and have little impact, we need to ask why. We need to think more about what role we want the General Assembly to play. In the view of the Pacific Islands Forum, the plenary should address key curr nt issues in a way that enhances the authority of the General Assembly. The Assembly should provide strategic guidance to the rest of the United Nations system.

We fully support the basic concept of the general debate. It is the one time of the year when a large number of Heads of Government and ministers engage with the United Nations and with each other. Formal statements setting out national positions and priorities are important, but beyond this we believe that, where possible, plenary sessions should involve a much more interactive exchange of views on priority issues. The term "debate" should not be a euphemism. There will, of course, be differences in the priority individual Member States attach to particular issues. That should not surprise us, but we can probably agree on many of the priorities for discussion and find creative ways of managing situations where we cannot presently agree. We also support thematic debates if they can be constructed to encourage meaningful discussion with outcomes that enhance the role of the General Assembly.

Mr. President, you have rightly referred to the possibility of rationalizing existing agenda items. We think, by way of example, that our consideration of reform itself has become somewhat splintered and that a combined interactive debate on all aspects of United

Nations reform might be useful. It would focus on Members' broad views on the reforms they wished to pursue, with details being discussed in more informal settings.

On the other side, we wonder whether there are major current issues that this Assembly should be, but is currently not discussing. For example, peacekeeping is among the United Nations most important activities and has a high public profile. Should not the General Assembly, at its highest level, be discussing peacekeeping issues? We would envisage such a discussion looking at the broader process of United Nations intervention, from conflict prevention through peacekeeping to the United Nations role in post-conflict situations. These issues have development as well as political and security aspects and bridge discussions taking place in a number of committees. Under the Charter, these are legitimate concerns of the General Assembly.

How we discuss issues is as important as the issues we discuss. If the plenary remains no more than a formal venue for delivering national statements, then, in terms of promoting the collective will of the United Nations, we will not be able to make it more relevant to the outside world.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Let me begin by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General for personally introducing the Secretary-General's reports on United Nations reform. The Deputy Secretary-General's commitment and dedication to United Nations reform are truly appreciated.

Allow me also to pay particular tribute to you, Sir, for the work you have invested in attempting to revitalize and improve the working methods of the General Assembly. There seems to be a willingness of Member States to take a closer look at how to improve the General Assembly, including the various Committees. We must take advantage of this growing momentum, and let me assure you, Sir, that Norway stands ready to support you in the weeks and months ahead.

In keeping with the prevailing reform spirit, I shall limit my intervention to a few main points, while circulating the full text of my prepared remarks.

The Secretary-General's opening statement to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly inspired us all to take a new look at United Nations reform. We share the Secretary-General's vision of global solidarity and security. Norway supports reforms leading to a more representative Security Council. We would like to see a more effective and efficient General Assembly with a better managed and more relevant agenda. The Economic and Social Council should be a real force in international development cooperation and a true partner to the Bretton Woods institutions. After years of discussions in working groups and other forums, we always seem to reach a stalemate. We therefore applaud the establishment of a high-level Panel of Eminent Persons to review these issues and recommend ways of strengthening the United Nations. We look forward to their findings and recommendations.

We need not wait for the recommendations of the Panel, however. There are measures that we can implement during the current session of the General Assembly. This leads me to the Secretary-General's proposals and recommendations, as contained in the reports prepared pursuant to last year's resolution 57/300, as well as to your concrete proposals, Mr. President. They are all important building blocks in the overarching reform of the United Nations.

Let me highlight some aspects of the Secretary-General's proposals and our views on them. Norway welcomes the emphasis on human rights in the report before us in document A/58/351. The work of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights in integrating human rights into all United Nations activities, particularly in areas such as humanitarian affairs, conflict prevention and peacekeeping, is of utmost importance. True respect for and protection of human rights starts at home. We applaud the concerted effort under way to provide an integrated and consistent response to Member States' requests for support in strengthening their national human rights systems. The ongoing work for enhanced implementation of human rights treaties, as well as for improving the system of special procedures, is both timely and necessary.

Increasing the effectiveness of development assistance is a prerequisite for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Improving the consistency and coordination of United Nations activities at the country level and increasing programme effectiveness is, in that respect, essential. We thus support the Secretary-General's proposals on strengthening the role, authority and capacity of the

United Nations Resident Coordinator, making the Coordinator the leader of a truly integrated United Nations country team. Norway is encouraged by the contributions and advances that the United Nations Development Group is making in the area of coordination and joint programming. A strengthened United Nations Development Assistance Framework and new joint programming tools are important and practical ways of moving this process ahead.

Commitment to United Nations reform will be a significant factor in our assessment of the various agencies and a precondition for further and increased Norwegian contributions. During the triennial comprehensive policy review next year, we will have the opportunity to assess whether or not we are progressing as rapidly as we would wish.

The Secretary-General has already taken action and made changes and improvements in a number of important fields. We note with satisfaction that these changes and reallocations of resources are concentrated in areas where we all share the same priorities. His actions clearly show an increased attention to development issues and particularly the special needs of Africa. There is also a new emphasis on an improved and enlightened human resources strategy and continued efforts to improve the Organization's management in general. We applaud those changes.

The revised budget format is a first important step in pursuing the Organization's priorities as defined by the Millennium Declaration and recent global conferences. The Secretary-General has proposed further improvements to the planning and budgeting system, including a shorter and more strategic medium-term plan that is linked to the budget and a single-stage intergovernmental review of the budget. The Norwegian Government supports those changes.

There are other areas in the Secretary-General's reform programme where consensus is not as apparent. The Millennium Declaration promises to give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society in general to contribute to the realization of the Organization's goals and programmes. The United Nations has different rules and practices for its various bodies. There is no system of accreditation to the General Assembly.

We are particularly keen on finding ways to make it easier for civil society actors and non-governmental organizations from the developing countries to play central roles in United Nations activities. This will also facilitate mobilization of the enormous resources of civil society for development cooperation. We therefore have great expectations as regards the upcoming recommendations of the Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations Relations with Civil Society.

Before concluding, I would like to return to your appeal, Mr. President, for concrete proposals as regards the working methods of the General Assembly. I would like, however, to remind the Assembly that there have indeed been improvements in our working methods in the past few years. Agenda items and debates have been successfully merged, most recently during our consideration a few days ago of issues related to Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Perhaps we should aim to make some concrete improvements in the area of resolutions as well. Resolutions and decisions are, after all, the main products of our work. We should look at ways of making them more operational and relevant. We do not need resolutions that are lengthy documents with the same text, year after year.

Perhaps the General Assembly should consider some limitations or guidelines on the length and composition of, and degree of repetition in, its resolutions. I believe that we should look to the practices of the funds and programmes in this respect. As to our lengthy agenda, it is indeed symptomatic of the problem that our discussions today cover four agenda items, two of them without any content or reporting requirements. Why, then, are they still on our agenda?

Norway is convinced that under the leadership of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and, more directly, under your leadership, Sir, Member States will rise to the occasion and take decisive action that will improve the efficiency of this most important of all multilateral institutions.

Mr. Baali (Algeria): I have the honour to speak on behalf the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the United Nations.

Mr. President, the main point that the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group wishes to convey today is its strong support for your continued efforts towards an authentic and genuine revitalization of the General Assembly, so as to restore its central position

as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, as set out in paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration.

We would like also to express our sincere appreciation to you, Sir, for having presented the non-paper that you and your competent team prepared, which we believe constitutes an excellent basis for today's debate as well as for our future efforts aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly.

We particularly appreciate the fact that you have indicated that you will take the lead in pursuing efforts to advance the process of revitalization. In this context, I can assure you of the full confidence of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group and its support for your undertaking.

The Working Group attaches great importance to the revitalization of the General Assembly and to improving its efficiency, and would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its willingness to participate actively in that important process.

The Non-Aligned Movement welcomes the steps you have proposed and most of the measures outlined in the non-paper, which correspond to the position and the approach adopted by the Working Group concerning the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly. An assessment of the progress achieved so far in the process of revitalizing the General Assembly, which started in the early 1990s, is needed before any additional measures in this regard can be considered.

Since 1993, the General Assembly has adopted several resolutions aimed at rationalizing its working methods and improving its efficiency. Among those resolutions, let me recall in particular resolutions 47/233 of 17 August 1993, 48/264 of 29 July 1994, 51/241 of 31 July 1997, 55/285 of 10 September 2001, 57/301 of 17 March 2003 and many other resolutions listed in the background information paper that you have circulated.

The measures outlined in the aforementioned resolutions put more emphasis on the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly and its working methods and less on the substantive aspects of the revitalization of the General Assembly.

The measures taken for the rationalization of the agenda — clustering and the biennialization and triannualization of items — and the working methods of the General Assembly and its Main Committees have contributed, to a certain extent, to a better functioning of the Assembly. However, those measures have had minimal impact in helping to achieve the main goal set out in paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration.

Equally important is the need fully to comply with the relevant guidelines on the rationalization of the agenda of the plenary and of the respective agendas of the main Committees, as outlined in annex I of resolution 48/264 and in the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

These guidelines are the following. First, agenda items concerning issues of closely related substance could be merged within a single agenda item or be incorporated as sub-items where this is possible without any loss of focus on the items or sub-items concerned. Secondly, items that cover related matters or issues could be considered in agreed clusters. Thirdly, biennialization and triennialization of items on the agenda of the Main Committees could be considered. Fourthly and lastly, the existing broad division of work among the Main Committees should be maintained.

The purpose of the process of the revitalization of the General Assembly is defined in paragraph 1 of the annex to resolution 55/285. In that paragraph, it is stated that:

> "The process of revitalizing the General Assembly and improving its efficiency focuses on the implementation of existing Assembly resolutions and decisions ... Improvement of the procedures and working methods of the Assembly is only a first step towards more substantive improvements in and revitalization of the Assembly. The goal of this ongoing process is to enable the Assembly to play its role effectively as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations".

As you have indicated in your non-paper, Mr. President, there are a number of measures contained in various resolutions, particularly resolutions 51/241 and 55/285, which have not been implemented. We appreciate the action you have taken so far in giving effect to some of those measures and look forward to further action to ensure their full implementation, including that of the measure contained in paragraph 12 of the annex to resolution

51/241, regarding General Assembly consideration of the report of the Security Council.

As part of the efforts aimed at resolving the problem of late issuance of documents and its negative impact on the work of the Assembly, the Secretary-General, in his report entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), proposed certain measures to streamline documentation, such as consolidating documents on related subjects, requiring reports to be sharper with more clearly defined recommendations for action, and observing a stipulated page limit of 16 pages. These measures, particularly the consolidation of documents — mainly those to be considered by the Third Committee and the Second Committee — will be reviewed in the context of the follow-up to resolution 57/300.

All these measures aimed at rationalizing the procedures and working methods of the General Assembly have had a positive effect on the functioning of the Assembly. However, a genuine and authentic revitalization of the General Assembly can be achieved only through additional bold and innovative measures that address the problem of the relative marginalization of the Assembly and its relationship with the other organs of the United Nations, especially the Security Council.

During its last meeting, the Non-Aligned Movement working group considered the two broad areas outlined in your non-paper, Mr. President, namely, enhancing the role and authority of the General Assembly and improving its working methods, and discussed some of the concrete proposals contained therein. However, given the time constraints, the working group was not able to consider thoroughly all the specific measures you proposed. The Non-Aligned Movement will therefore continue to study carefully the proposals put forward in the non-paper, so as to reflect on them in the context of the informal consultations you intend to convene in mid-November 2003.

At this stage of the process aimed at revitalizing the Assembly, the Non-Aligned Movement would like to put on the record the following.

First, the Non-Aligned Movement believes that the strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly would be a concrete measure to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Assembly, and we cannot but support such a measure. A well staffed Office would provide the requisite substantive support to the President to enable him to play a leadership role, would provide continuity and institutional memory to the Office of the presidency and would enrich the substantive content of proposals emanating from the Office of the President. The Non-Aligned Movement will, in due time, articulate and submit a concrete proposal in that regard.

Secondly, the Non-Aligned Movement supports the proposals aimed at programming the consideration of agenda items over the full year of the session, rather than concentrating them in the period from September to December, as is the current practice. If General Assembly agenda items could be grouped according to their importance and urgency, such sequencing could make effective use of the whole year. That would reduce the burden put on small and medium-size delegations and enable them to participate effectively in the negotiation process and in the huge number of meetings — more than 6,000 — held each year at Headquarters in New York.

Thirdly, the Non-Aligned Movement believes that Member States have an important role to play in implementing resolutions, particularly their sponsors, which could take more responsibility in that regard. On the other hand, there are some resolutions that have not been implemented because of a lack of resources and it is essential in those cases that adequate resources be allocated to ensure their implementation.

The Non-Aligned Movement welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a high-level panel for the reform of the principal organs of the Organization and the review of their effectiveness, their coherence and the balance of roles and responsibilities among them. The imminent personalities who will be members of the panel should meet important requirements such as high integrity, competence and neutrality, and should be knowledgeable about the functioning and the intricacies of the Organization.

Mr. Acosta Bonilla (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Further, we believe that the panel should also take into account what has been accomplished so far in the various processes of institutional reform. The Movement believes that the current revitalization exercise, and whatever exercise we may engage in

regarding the reform of the Security Council, should at some point converge with the new process initiated by the Secretary-General.

Those are a few of the ideas we wanted to share at this stage. The Non-Aligned Movement working group is still considering and working on further proposals. I intend during the coming weeks to submit to the President and to the whole membership some concrete proposals which we hope will strengthen the efficiency of the work of the General Assembly and enhance its political role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations. It is also our intention to fully cooperate with the President and to interact with all groups and delegations to achieve that goal.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would like to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I am pleased to speak after my Algerian brother, Ambassador Baali, because we also hope to coordinate our efforts with the Malaysian presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement in our important task of United Nations reform.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend to the Secretary-General the sincere congratulations of the Group of 77 on all his efforts to foster his agenda for change, designed to refocus United Nations activities on priorities which we, as Member States, laid down in the Millennium Declaration and in the major United Nations conferences and summits held in recent years.

Reform is a process. This process requires a strategy and priorities to address all the challenges of globalization. The challenges for us in the Group of 77 are, first of all, the reduction of poverty, as well as the maintenance of international peace and security, because the two go together: there can be no maintenance of peace, strictly speaking, without economic security. But this also pertains to all of what we now call the new threats to peace, and especially to the campaign to combat international terrorism.

Our objective is to best serve humankind, to improve the standard of living of millions of people who are suffering the ordeals of poverty, illness and all the other devastating scourges. That is the principle of our collective action, which should guide us when we talk about reform and which must be followed with respect for the basic values that informed the birth of the United Nations.

We are convinced that reform of the multilateral institutions is more necessary than ever to enable those institutions, under optimal circumstances, to adapt to the new problems and new situations facing the world. This common exercise should be accompanied by a sustained effort and by real determination to strengthen our collective action and realize the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

Reform is not an end in itself. Its main objective is to strengthen international cooperation and to ensure the fulfilment of commitments entered into during United Nations conferences and summits, with a view to enabling the developing countries, especially the poorest and least developed among them, to attain the Millennium Development Goals for the economic and social well-being of their peoples.

Strengthening our Organization requires an overhaul of the architecture of the intergovernmental bodies and of their work programmes and methods — primarily the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

Regarding the Security Council, the organ with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, it is obvious that the conditions which led to agreement on its membership and functioning have changed profoundly. Therefore, the question of Security Council reform should be on the agenda of meetings among our leaders, so that they can outline Council reforms that we would then refine in New York so they may then be placed in the context of a reformed Charter.

The revitalization of the General Assembly is at the heart of the necessary United Nations reform. It cannot be carried out piecemeal but must be part of a consistent approach. All efforts must be channelled towards the objectives which our heads of State or Government set out in the general debate during this session of the General Assembly, so as to ensure the positive involvement of expertise and political will. All parties involved in international relations have expressed their support for this reform, in the conviction that a more efficient organization better adapted to the post-cold-war world is in the interest of all members of the family of nations, whatever their size, religion or culture.

The Group of 77 and China was created in the 1960s to work together for the democratization of international relations by eliminating the major

disparities which divided the members of the international community. Strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations has thus always been among our priorities. It should enable us to act better to reduce poverty and eliminate the most serious social problems.

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration we have spared no effort towards the convening of major international conferences on sustainable development, financing of development or international trade. This year, thanks to the efforts of all, we succeeded in adopting resolution 57/270 B on the integrated follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of those major conferences, in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals. Resolution 57/270 B means that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council can play a role in monitoring and following up implementation and in the adoption of necessary adjustment measures. To that end, the Economic and Social Council should be more active in coordinating the activities of the specialized agencies and in strengthening cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions in order to give them the necessary momentum.

The composition of the Economic and Social Council, in relation to its effectiveness increased, should be the subject of an in-depth analysis. We hope that this analysis will be carried out as quickly as possible. Moreover, it is important for the General Assembly to be in session throughout the year and to respond to proposals from anywhere in the world, directly or via the Economic and Social Council, so as to prepare studies and react promptly to the challenges of globalization. In the same vein, the role and presence of the presidency of the General Assembly must be strengthened and given adequate resources to that end.

The General Assembly should be able to set up thematic groups whenever issues arise on which it must take a stand. The membership of such groups, if they are open-ended, could work with full respect for transparency. It is in this manner that we worked well this year in the open-ended ad hoc working group on integrated follow-up and implementation of the major United Nations conferences.

The Group of 77 and China will support all initiatives to ensure the better effectiveness and visibility of the work of the General Assembly. We believe the Assembly can make better use of its decision-making power involving budgetary matters, a power which it has under Article 17 of the Charter. We must continue budgetary and financial reform along the lines set forth by resolution 57/300. This means that the General Assembly must have the resources necessary to make strategic choices and decide on priorities when it enters into a budgetary exercise. Such an exercise cannot be only technical, and cannot lie within the sole purview of Fifth Committee experts. In this connection, consideration of the future of the Committee for Programme and Coordination should go forward so that the Committee's functions are actually carried out.

As I just said, it would be useful to extend the work of the General Assembly to the entire calendar year so that we can focus on our various activities in a way that would make us as visible as possible. Work on revitalization and reform, now begun, should certainly continue next year, without awaiting the report of the panel of eminent personalities to be set up by the Secretary-General.

The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to preparation for the high-level meeting scheduled for 2005 on the integrated follow-up and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, as provided for in resolution 57/270 B. We hope that the 2005 summit will give impetus to development questions before the General Assembly. To that end, the summit should be prepared with all the requisite professionalism during the upcoming year. A preparatory committee will probably need to be set up to ensure the success of the 2005 summit, which for us, as a developing country, will provide an important stimulus.

The Group of 77 and China intend to give the presidency all cooperation necessary for the early attainment of concrete results because we believe that this is the best way to initiate the much desired dynamic of reform.

Mr. Balarezo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour to speak on behalf of the 19 member States of the Rio Group: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela and my country, Peru.

The Rio Group reaffirms its full support and cooperation in the effort to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. Also, it welcomes the important document that has been submitted, with which it agrees in several areas. Like the President of the General Assembly, we believe that this is an opportune moment to strengthen the role of the Assembly and that it should not be wasted because such opportunities do not come along often.

We hope that the reform initiatives will be both bold and coherent, bold in not shirking the most difficult issues and coherent in ensuring the promotion of multilateralism in the Organization, in particular by affirming the General Assembly's ability to fully carry out the functions entrusted to it under the Charter.

Recently, at their summit held in Cusco last May, the heads of State or Government of the Rio Group countries decided to employ the full capacity of their countries to encourage the strengthening of the multilateral system based on international law and the Charter. They determined that the General Assembly plays a fundamental role in that task.

The Rio Group is determined to make its contribution to the Assembly's regaining its effective political leadership of the Organization's activities, with a real capacity for action and purpose, as all the Member States of the Organization recognized in the Millennium Declaration.

In that context, I wish to present on behalf of the Rio Group some suggestions for the revitalization of the General Assembly under the two clusters presented by the President.

First, with respect to strengthening the authority and role of the General Assembly, the United Nations Charter conferred a broad range of functions and powers on the General Assembly to deal with all questions related not only to cooperation for development but also the maintenance of international peace and security. Therefore, the Rio Group considers that the General Assembly, as the most democratic and representative organ, must have the capacity to react appropriately and to discuss the issues of the greatest urgency and importance for the international community.

To that end, it is essential to strengthen the role of the president of the General Assembly, through the coordinated supported and balanced work of the Assembly's General Committee. That means that the capacity for initiative and action should not be delegated to individuals as such but according to an official working structure based on clear rules.

It is a basic requirement that such a mechanism for management receives the necessary financial and technical support from the Secretariat, including the appointment of permanent officials who would be of great advantage because of their liaison with the Secretariat and their collective memory of the lessons learned from the work of each session.

In addition, the provisions of resolution 51/241 must be complied with; the resolution requests the General Committee of the General Assembly to prepare a document containing conclusions, suggestions and recommendations based on its experience in order to simplify and rationalize the work of the General Committee in the following session.

In order for the General Assembly to be relevant, it must be able to prioritize the main issues at a given time, giving them their due attention. That does not mean creating an agenda of first and second class items but simply identifying the interests of the international community at a given moment in order to achieve timely and concrete results.

The Rio Group also supports the proposal that the Department of Public Information create a plan of action for the better dissemination of the results of the General Assembly's work. That will require improving the quality and relevance of the recommendations and conclusions adopted.

It is necessary to comply with the various General Assembly resolutions requesting the president of the General Assembly to prepare an assessment of the debate on the meetings devoted to the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, as well as to the report of the Security Council. The assessment of those debates should also consider whether a more thorough examination of those reports by the Assembly is required, including through informal consultations. The president's assessment should also contain proposals on ways to facilitate a more in-depth discussion of those items, as indicated in resolutions 48/264 and 51/241.

With respect to the second cluster, working methods of the General Assembly, the Rio Group considers that the work of simplifying the agenda must

continue, starting with the selection of the priority issues, which could be done by the president of the General Assembly and the General Committee. That does not necessarily mean eliminating items currently on the agenda but deciding which items should be treated at a specific time.

The Rio Group agrees on the need for a more coherent and balanced calendar of meetings in order to avoid concentrating most of the work of the Main Committees and the plenary of the General Assembly into a mere three months.

The numerous formal and informal meetings, panels, presentations of reports and parallel negotiations prevent the effective and sustained treatment of agenda items. The president has reminded us that in order to strengthen the role of the General Assembly, all countries must adequately participate in its meetings. That is almost impossible, given the current workload. This situation is incomprehensible, given that the length of every General Assembly session is one calendar year — the time necessary to cover all the agenda items in a more coherent, orderly and thorough fashion.

Moreover, the Rio Group believes that each Main Committee must initiate a process of reform to optimize its work. This should include reviewing their agendas, the number of their resolutions and the distribution of their tasks over the course of the year. The consultations and coordination of Committees that deal with common items must also be improved to avoid duplication of efforts. And the work of others, such as the Fourth Committee, should be enhanced with the addition of new items, including some considered in plenary meeting.

With regard to the debate already begun in the First Committee, the Rio Group considers that that Committee must strengthen its work in the area of disarmament and international security through the effective use of the powers and functions granted to the General Assembly by the Charter. Furthermore, the Rio Group considers that the First Committee must make a greater contribution to international cooperation in the political field.

We must reflect on the existing decision-making process of the General Assembly. The rule that must guide us is to achieve the greatest common denominator and the greatest degree of cooperation from all Member States. The rule of consensus is very important, but it must not become an instrument to impede the consideration and the promotion of matters that can be vital to a substantial majority of Member States.

But the most important matter is the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. We must ensure that the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are fully implemented. Here, the Secretariat can assist us. Perhaps, at the beginning of each session, the Secretariat could submit a thorough report on resolutions that have not been implemented. It would also be worthwhile to have a Secretariat evaluation of the reasons why those resolutions have not been implemented.

If it is wrong for States not to implement the recommendations of Assembly resolutions, it is even less plausible for the Secretariat and other multilateral organs subordinate to the Organization not to carry out the provisions of resolutions that apply to them. A study of that kind would also allow us to look into the implementability of such resolutions and to adopt measures to deal with that problem. It is also important to encourage the submission of short and concise draft resolutions, based mainly on new elements.

We believe that it is very important to prepare a summary identifying, from among the numerous suggestions presented, specific substantive proposals which can garner the support of the majority of States; this will allow development of this process. The Rio Group hopes to continue participating in this important effort of revitalizing the General Assembly, which the President leads and in which we participate enthusiastically.

The Rio Group also attaches great importance to the process of strengthening the Organization, initiated by the Secretary-General. In that regard, the Rio Group expresses its satisfaction at the efforts undertaken to implement resolution 57/300, particularly with regard to budgetary reform. In that respect, the Rio Group welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal to create a shorter, more strategic medium-term plan that takes into consideration emerging trends and new challenges facing the Organization, and that does not leave out the priorities set by Member States.

Regarding the draft budget, the Rio Group considers it worthwhile for it to have a broad vision of major programmatic changes and variations and

requirements of resources that reflect those changes. It also considers it necessary to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation functions through the Committee for Programme and Coordination, in order to determine the ongoing relevancy, efficiency and impact of the work of the Organization. The Group will work constructively during the intergovernmental debate in the Fifth Committee.

Finally, our countries will continue to participate actively in the debates and negotiations in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights, with a view to ensuring full implementation of the objective of strengthening the Organization.

Mr. Limon (Suriname): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Suriname.

We thank the President for convening this meeting, and even more for his approach to the issue of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. In placing this matter before the Assembly at this stage of the fifty-eighth session, he has demonstrated not just commitment, but also determination to move this issue to a meaningful level within the Assembly. CARICOM welcomes his initiative and leadership and is unequivocal in its commitment to work towards meaningful advancement in this decade-long process.

Our commitment to revitalization of the General Assembly finds resonance not only in the universal call for change among the diplomatic and intellectual community, and not only in the more than 150 statements issued by our heads of State or Government or Foreign Ministers, who, from this very podium, pronounced on the need for reform and revitalization of our Organization, although that in itself is a clear mandate.

The call for reform comes from the people of the world, who increasingly sense that we, who are charged with the task of representing their needs, have failed to make the United Nations a more effective instrument for pursuing the fight for development for all peoples of the world; the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease; the fight against injustice, violence, terror and crime; and the fight against the degradation and destruction of our common home, in keeping with our commitments in the Millennium Declaration. This is a clear mandate. What prevents us from responding to this call? The time has come for us to move away from simply making rhetorical calls for reform and to finally take action.

Our first action must be to reaffirm the position that the General Assembly is the principal organ of the United Nations, for it is in the General Assembly that we find the universality of this Organization. Only the General Assembly can speak on behalf of all the peoples of the world.

CARICOM supports the proposal put forward by the President, which groups the revitalization issue into two clusters — one on enhancing the authority and the role of the General Assembly and one on improving the working methods of the General Assembly.

A number of ideas have been put forward on improving the working methods of the General Assembly. For CARICOM, such improvements should lead to more substantive debates, more interactive discussions and more implementation. We acknowledge the concerns of those who worry that reform of the working methods could be used to marginalize issues of less significance to some influential delegations. CARICOM will be vigilant in ensuring that important issues are not marginalized, but we also recognize the need for flexibility in finding common ground in fulfilling our mandate.

We believe that improving our work and ensuring that we produce relevant and meaningful outcomes represents a significant contribution to the enhancement of the authority and the role of the General Assembly. Relevant and meaningful outcomes will be translated into positive results for those we serve.

CARICOM believes that an equally important component of the revitalization process is the strengthening of the office of the President of the General Assembly. The President must have the resources to carry out the mandates entrusted to him by the Charter, as well as those that result from the deliberations of this body. He must also be given the resources necessary for him to take the message of the Assembly beyond the confines of this Hall. CARICOM looks forward to working with him on this most

important issue. We hereby express our willingness to accommodate all constructive proposals.

This conversation on reform and revitalization has continued for over a decade. We have expressed in every possible way our understanding of the need for reform — for change. Our level of activity aimed at achieving change, however, remains sluggish at best. As The Right Honourable P. J. Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica, put it, we must resuscitate the powers of the General Assembly and assert its role as the principal organ of the United Nations. Let us act now.

Mr. Elnaggar (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): No one in this Hall is in any doubt about the urgent need for reform. That need has been evidenced by recent events and crises in the world and the failure of the international order to carry out its responsibilities in an effective manner so as to ensure that the foundations of this international Organization are safeguarded and that it be allowed to confront the new challenges that it faces.

There are many reform initiatives relating to, inter alia, the revitalization of the General Assembly, the reform and expansion of the Security Council, the functioning and role of the Economic and Social Council, reconsideration of the role of the Trusteeship Council and the strengthening of the United Nations at the administrative and institutional levels, as well as the strengthening of the post of the Secretary-General and reducing the pressure on him and on his decisions.

In our view, reform in the various fields must be a comprehensive, integral process. Our unity of purpose must be manifested in the increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of this international Organization in all areas and the wider participation of all Member States in the decision-making process, as well as an expansion and fusion of the issues that are on the international agenda. In this respect, we believe that the process should be based on a firm foundation and that selectivity must be avoided when determining which areas require reform and in what manner. This in turn will require openness and transparency with regard to the reality of the current international situation, without unjustified pessimism or exaggerated and unfounded ambitions being manifested.

In this context, I would like to make some general points, within a framework of transparency, which could contribute to the desired goal of reform. First, we must all agree that the institutional reform of the United Nations is governed by a number of factors, some of which undermine the scope of the reform effort itself, as well as our ability to carry it out. Reform at all levels is, in principle, a political process aimed at enhancing the authority of the General Assembly and expanding the participation of Member States in elaborating the objectives of the Organization and all its resolutions, including those relating to international peace and security and support for the role of the Organization in the social, economic and political fields throughout the world, which is in our common interests.

We must therefore understand that an approach to reform that focuses only on the rationalization of some procedures — despite the importance of that — will not bring about the objective that we all seek. That is the starting point. We would like to make clear that there is an enormous difference in positions between those who want to carry out a radical reform — which is required in many important fields — and amend the Charter, whether by addition or by omission, and those who believe that the status quo should be maintained and that the role of the United Nations should be limited to purely humanitarian work. Despite the importance of such work, however, it cannot meet the aspirations of peoples or the requirements of the current international order. For example, the United Nations is still far from undertaking a leading political role in specific boiling crises or in the international economic order, which is controlled by closed cadres of the elite.

In this respect, I believe we must thoroughly examine the issue of General Assembly resolutions and its authority within the framework of the "Uniting for peace" resolution. That would be very useful in these difficult times when people have lost faith in the Organization.

If the role of the Security Council — the principal organ for maintaining international peace and security, pursuant to the Charter — has been undermined, as can be seen from many recent events, and its role limited to reforming policies that it did not draw up or set, then the question would be: is an expansion of the Council's membership sufficient to increase and enhance its effectiveness and efficiency? If the answer is in the affirmative, what would then be the scope of the expansion, and would it reflect the reality of the international political arena in an inclusive manner —

or would it be carried out with selectivity so as to reflect only part of that reality?

Secondly, there are many reform initiatives before us, some of which overlap in certain areas, and they need to be rationalized. Discussions on the same issue are currently taking place on parallel tracks. There are also other approaches that are trying to bring together separate and isolated areas of reform. In this context, I would like to note the discussions that are taking place in the General Assembly itself concerning the revitalization and enhancement of its role. Egypt also supports the initiative of the Secretary-General, spelled out in his statement on 23 September, to set up a high-level panel of eminent personalities to discuss the same issue and other matters. In this connection, a report will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. Thus the General Assembly will consider the results reached by the panel, which will examine that issue and the possibility of reaching consensus on some of the proposals in that connection.

I should like to note that discussions on the revitalization of the role and rationalization of the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees are taking place in parallel in several committees, each considering the same issue and without any unified guiding vision. I would therefore propose that the President of the General Assembly undertake a lead role in the preparation of a clear programme of action, with a specific time frame lasting through this and the next session and ending with the sixtieth, to cover all such debates. In that manner, we can use the available time with greater efficiency, avoid duplication and establish clear benchmarks during each session, including specific and practical objectives.

We also note the importance of establishing an appropriate mechanism to coordinate the work of the Panel Of Eminent Persons on United Nations Relations with Civil Society and of the General Assembly in the same area. My delegation has already proposed that the President of the General Assembly assume that vital coordinating role at this session.

Finally, with respect to promoting the role of the United Nations and following up the implementation of resolution 57/300, I should like to note the ambiguity that surrounds both the proposals submitted to develop the process of adopting the United Nations programme budget and the role of multilateral governmental frameworks in the various phases of that process. I wish to stress here the importance that Egypt, like many other developing countries, attaches to the mid-term planning of our Organization. We believe that, without such mid-term planning, it will be difficult to identify our priorities and to assess progress made in them. I wish once again to reiterate the importance of considering this matter in a comprehensive manner encompassing its various phases in order to be able to determine its shortcomings and to suggest remedies thereto.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the associated Countries, Romania and Turkey; and the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the decision to hold today's joint debate, as it brings together different strands of work on United Nations reform. Through the initiatives launched by the Secretary-General and others, as well as thanks to the personal engagement of the President of the General Assembly, there is an encouraging sense of momentum to take forward our common interest in strengthening the United Nations. The initial reactions of Member States have been very positive and they provide an indication of their commitment to moving the process forward. We have before us a common path and the European Union wants to walk it together with others.

The European Union supports the process set in motion by the Secretary-General. We want a strong and efficient United Nations system. We believe that multilateral institutions should be updated and strengthened. We are ready to contribute actively to the goal of building an international order based on effective multilateral institutions, within the fundamental framework of the United Nations Charter and our joint vision for the United Nations, as articulated by our heads of State in the Millennium Declaration. The European Union gives its support to the establishment of a high-level Panel of Eminent Personalities and we look forward to receiving recommendations from the Secretary-General in 2004, based on the work of the Panel.

The European Union further believes that reform should extend to the main United Nations policies in

order to make them more effective in the face of new and evolving global challenges. In this regard, the European Union and its member States continue to work to strengthen the coherence and consistency of their collective actions in principal United Nations organs with a view to ensuring greater respect for multilateral decisions and greater determination in their implementation. While recent improvements in the working methods of the Security Council should be further developed, there is a need for a comprehensive reform that makes it more representative, more effective and more democratic.

With respect to General Assembly revitalization, the European Union would like to express its appreciation for Mr. Hunte's leadership and commitment in steering the revitalization process. We welcome his recent non-paper as an excellent basis for making real progress during this sessions of the General Assembly. We share his views, both on substance and on process, and are heartened by the positive response they received during the first informal consultations last week. The proposals now need further elaboration with a view to taking decisions as soon as possible. We should be ambitious and at the same time focus on issues where progress can be made.

We agree with the President's proposal to hold informal consultations grouping the issues under two headings: first, enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly, including to restore its central role in international debate and decision-making; and secondly, improving the working methods. In this framework, we are ready to work with the President in achieving concrete decisions to be adopted at this session of the General Assembly.

Enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly is first and foremost a matter of political will. It is our shared responsibility to create the conditions in which the Assembly can fulfil its role as defined in the Charter. The General Assembly requires improvements in its working methods, but improving those working methods is not an end in itself. It will underpin our efforts to enhance the General Assembly's authority and role, as I was saying before. We would like to highlight the following priorities.

First, we must strengthen the role of the President and his Office. We would, for instance, welcome temporary secondment of additional Secretariat staff to the President's Office. We also would suggest exploring the possibility of extending a President's term or of introducing the troika system in order to draw upon experience and provide continuity.

Second, we must enhance the role of the General Committee. We welcome the initial steps that the President has taken. We could envisage a bureau function for the Committee in support of the President. One of the specific additional roles of the General Committee could be to come up with recommendations to streamline the reporting requirements.

Third, we must work in the Main Committees to strengthen their functioning and encourage each Committee to find efficient ways of organising their work. Of course, these proposals should be consistent with the wider context of revitalisation of the Assembly as a whole.

Fourth, we must develop constructive interaction with and between the bureaux of the main Committees, for example by joint bureaux meetings to identify potential areas of overlap and to review their respective programmes of work. We could also consider election of the bureaux earlier in the year, as is now the case for the President of the Assembly, to facilitate continuity and planning.

Fifth, we must communicate more effectively the decisions of the Assembly to Governments and agencies and disseminate information thereon to the broader public.

Sixth, we must look again at how to do better in implementing past General Assembly resolutions on efficient working.

Seventh, we must establish a closer link between the Assembly's agenda and the global challenges of the outside world. Debates in the plenary and in the main Committees should focus on a limited number of key issues of common interest. The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals should provide the overarching framework in that regard. Prominent outsiders could be invited to give their views on these issues. The general debate could set the stage by focusing on key themes agreed on by Member States beforehand — ideally building upon priorities indicated by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization.

The European Union also believes that some items do not require annual debate. Considering them every two or three years would make room for more in-

depth debates as well as for topical new items. We suggest that, under the guidance of the President, specific ideas to that effect could be elaborated. Debates should become more interactive, for instance by using alternative formats such as high-level dialogues and panels more often.

The General Assembly should become more action-oriented. Resolutions and decisions should be shorter and less repetitive and focus on implementation within a given time-frame. Furthermore, their implementation by Member States, the Secretariat and other parts of the United Nations system should be monitored more vigorously. The European Union seconds the suggestion that Member States proposing a draft resolution become the "focal points" for its follow-up. My Algerian colleague, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, has touched on this point, as have others, with whom we fully agree.

In the same spirit, we support efforts to strengthen the Economic and Social Council so that it can perform its role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination. A great deal has been done already, for example to improve its methods of work.

Priority should be given to implementing General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, in particular in the following areas: first, to elaborate a programme of work based on cross-cutting themes for the follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; secondly, to review the methods of work of the functional commissions methods of work before 2005, in order better to pursue the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and Summits, while recognizing that there is no need for a uniform approach for all functional commissions; thirdly, to enhance the interaction with its subsidiary bodies; fourthly, to review the role of the annual spring meeting and its articulation with the biannual high-level dialogue, in relation to the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The EU welcomes the initiative of the President of the Economic and Social Council to stimulate thinking on the functioning of the Council. An essential leadership role must be played by the President and the Bureau in taking forward these ideas.

We hope that this debate will address wider issues, such as, first, the articulation of the Economic and Social Council's work with that of the General Assembly and its main committees in the economic and social sphere; and secondly, the Council's interaction with the Security Council, for example on post-conflict issues.

Turning to the implementation of the Secretary-General's proposals on the strengthening of the United Nations, the EU fully supports the General Assembly's resolution 57/300. We welcome the Secretary-General's analysis on a single-stage approach to budgetary and programming decisions, to streamline budgetary documentation and to reduce the complexity of budget procedures.

We have made clear that the European Union believes that the basic structure of the General Assembly's decision-making process is valid. The decision-making process must continue to be transparent and representative of the full membership, allowing for full consideration of budgetary and programmatic issues. Within that framework, we should be ready for a frank appraisal of how well the existing structures operate, in order to guarantee the efficient functioning of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee. The monitoring and evaluation role of the CPC could be enhanced in parallel with a more effective contribution on programmatic issues.

There are serious questions as to the usefulness of the medium-term plan and the budget outline. There are any number of ways to proceed to agreed outcomes this autumn, whether conjoining the medium-term plan with the programme budget, as some have suggested, or harmonizing the plan more effectively with a rejuvenated budget outline as part of a dual-component strategic framework. Both would better align programming and priority-setting with resource implications, which should be one of the primary objectives of this reform process.

How to move the process forward? Strengthening, enhancing and reforming the United Nations, as the only universal Organization, is necessary and urgent. We believe that, to ensure continuity of this process, there should be regular overall reviews on the progress being made in shaping the reform.

The European Union is ready to work for more concrete improvements in the efficiency of United Nations bodies, policies and processes. We are willing to cooperate with the broader United Nations membership, reaching out to other groups and Member States with the aim of delivering tangible results as of the current session of the General Assembly.

Let us not put off until tomorrow what we can do today. The present momentum will not last forever. The year 2005 will be the natural point for us to review many United Nations processes. We support a comprehensive review in 2005 of major United Nations conferences, within the overarching framework of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.44

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

44th plenary meeting
Monday, 27 October 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Lamba (Malawi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 55 and 57 to 59 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/786, A/58/175, A/58/351, A/58/382, A/58/395 and A/58/395/Corr.1)

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): In his address at the beginning of this session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General underscored the importance of collective action in addressing global challenges. He also emphasized the need for the effective functioning of major organs of the United Nations and the relationship between them. We fully agree with the Secretary-General on that. The participation of the Deputy Secretary-General in this debate reflects the importance that the Office of the Secretary-General attaches to the work of the General Assembly and to this debate.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Group of 77 and China, and indeed in our national capacity, we attach great importance to the issues under discussion. In that connection, we welcome the President's readiness to take the lead in implementing the various resolutions concerning revitalization of the General Assembly. Beginning with the forty-sixth session, we have made considerable progress, but the changes on the international scene dictate that we should continue to revitalize the General Assembly and to strengthen the system as a whole.

In the President's informal note on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, he proposed that consideration of such revitalization be clustered under "Enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly" and "Improving the working methods of the General Assembly". Much has been accomplished in the latter category. Therefore, for the purpose of today's debate, I shall confine my brief remarks to a number of aspects of enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly. I shall do so because the current international situation demands an authoritative General Assembly that commands respect and legitimacy worldwide.

The President has made available to the Assembly a compilation that indicates the road we have travelled and how far we still have to go in implementing the decisions we have taken here. Perhaps we must pause and ask ourselves why resolutions of the General Assembly are not

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03-58095 (E)

implemented by its own members, whereas those of the Security Council are, with the exception of a few cases, in which some members tend to ignore them. That then prompts us to ask whether we can earnestly enhance the work of the General Assembly without looking seriously once again at the United Nations Charter.

For example, while the Security Council has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, the General Assembly can also play an effective role. As we have it now, conflict situations are confined to the Security Council. Important issues are brought to the General Assembly when the Council fails to act. We propose that major international conflict situations be considered first in plenary meeting, after which the Security Council should meet, having benefited from the views of the general membership. That, in our view, would not contradict Article 10 of the Charter.

The general debate is highly valued by Member States. Hence, participation at the highest level has been on the increase; it gives Member States an opportunity to pronounce on many issues of national or international importance. The focusing of each meeting of the general debate might develop into small high-level meetings or special sessions. That needs to be given some serious thought before it is put into practice.

The voluntary 15-minute limit on statements has, no doubt, shortened the general debate. However, displaying the lights is perhaps less courteous to the speaker. Our suggestion is that the lights be displayed only to the speaker.

My delegation has always wondered what determines the tenure of various United Nations bodies. For example, members are elected to the Economic and Social Council for three years, and non-permanent Security Council members serve for two years on the Council, while the President of the General Assembly is elected for 12 months. Having served on the Security Council, I can say from experience that, for non-permanent members, the first six months are for learning the ropes. Thus it is during the second half of the year that one begins to comprehend fully the workings of the Council and thus to make a meaningful contribution.

The point I am making is that there is a gap between the assumption of office and making an impact as far as the tenure of the office of the President of the General Assembly is concerned. For example, resolutions adopted under the current presidency will reach Member States around February. That leaves an implementation period of about six months for Member States, after which the Secretary-General will request information on implementation from Member States in order to compile his reports to the General Assembly. And so the cycle continues. The biennialization of items will assist in ensuring that effective action will be taken. However, that must be done with the understanding of the countries concerned.

Every year, during the general debate, the President of the General Assembly is congratulated on having assumed his or her high office. But what are the working conditions of that office? As a country that has had the rare honour of presiding over the General Assembly, our experience shows that we, the Member States, must adequately equip the President's office if it is to meet the demands placed upon it. Resources from the regular budget must be made available to the office, and the onus must not be left on the country assuming the presidency. The institutional memory must be extended to the substantive issues, discussions and recommendations of General Assembly sessions.

Most of the former presidents of the General Assembly have served for many years at the United Nations. Others, upon their return home, have assumed higher posts in their countries. Individually and collectively, with their international status, they bring to the table vast knowledge and experience on issues in the international arena. They certainly can play an important role as facilitators. In our view, the former presidents of the General Assembly should be engaged in leading working groups of the Assembly and should serve on panels or committees to look into specific subjects upon which the General Assembly might decide. That would not only elevate the office but also contribute to raising awareness of the work and the authority of the General Assembly.

In closing, let me say a word about the Fourth Committee. It is through the Fourth Committee that many of our countries were decolonized, and, as a result, we are Members of this great Organization. The Committee needs to be strengthened by reviewing, inter alia, progress being made with regard to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Mr. Al-Awadi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to align itself fully with the

statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Mr. President, my delegation would like to extend its thanks for the distinguished efforts you have made and for your insistence on and interest in the issue of enhancing the General Assembly and rationalizing and reforming its work. The unofficial NAM paper, which you have presented and which was discussed in informal consultations on 17 October 2003, is a clear proof of your intention to bring about a positive conclusion to the issue of rationalizing and reforming the work of the General Assembly and enhancing its role, thus complementing what your predecessors have done in previous sessions. Kuwait believes that the NAM paper presented by you, Mr. President, last week contained many practical proposals for improving the working methods of the General Assembly. We can, therefore, refer to it and be guided by it through the next phase in order to reach consensus on the largest possible number of proposals contained in it.

Kuwait, through its Permanent Mission here, has given special importance to the issue of rationalization and reform of the work of the General Assembly because the results would be a reflection, in the end, of our performance at this important organ of the United Nations. We believe that it is important to present our remarks on this issue, which concern the general principles that should guide us during the reform process. We will thus present proposals on procedures that we believe will bring about the desired objectives of this process.

It is essential that we use the present positive momentum to achieve some noticeable progress in the rationalization process of the work of the General Assembly, in accordance with general principles that will be a guide for Member States, for subsequent Presidents of the General Assembly and for the Secretariat in the implementation of any steps in this area.

My delegation has noted that the reform process comes up every year associated with specific ideas, enthusiasm or keenness, but without setting up guiding principles that should be applied at the beginning of every session. We should not repeat ourselves concerning this issue at every session. Our objective in setting up such principles is to protect the political interests of any party interested in this process.

The general principles and proposals concerning work procedures according to which we should work in the next meeting are as follow:

First, we must agree on the principle of continuity in the reform and rationalization of procedures, so that the reform process is not limited to a specific session or a specific presidency but will continue, whether the results are positive or negative, even if we have not reached agreement on a specific area of rationalization and reform.

Secondly, agreement on the process of rationalization and reform of the working methods of the General Assembly is not only related to technical matters. It is also related to sensitive political matters and, accordingly, political dimensions should be taken into account. We repeat what we said in our statement at the last session on the need to take into account the political nature of the work of the United Nations, which means that we will not follow the procedures used in private sector institutions.

Thirdly, the reform process should be fully transparent and all States should have the right to know about all proposals. These proposals should be presented in a fair and equal manner, taking into account the ideas of small States and small delegations, which have difficulty following the sessions of the General Assembly and its many committees because of their frequency and the fact that they are held at the same time as other meetings.

We call upon the President of the General Assembly, his successors and the Secretariat to follow closely the ideas of Member States and to help us crystallize all the ideas agreed upon in the area of reform of the General Assembly, particularly proposals concerning working methods and procedures. These proposals should be submitted and adopted without delay, so that they will not be superseded by other proposals and procedures that are not yet agreed upon.

My delegation believes that one of the most important procedural changes that the General Assembly has started to implement is the clustering of similar items for debate. We call for the continuation of this clustering approach, particularly when discussing items in the General Assembly.

Concerning rationalization of the agenda items of the General Assembly by biennializing or triennializing certain ones or cancelling them, this method is a bit

sensitive but can be implemented if we take into account the political aspects of those issues. In this context, the most important thing is consultation in two phases. First, the secretariat of the General Assembly would, each year before starting the regular session of the General Assembly, consult with States or with specific States concerning a specific item that could be postponed to a coming session or a procedure that could be adopted that would rationalize the method. The secretariat, after completing the consultation process, would then submit a paper through the President of the General Assembly that would indicate the items on which agreement had been reached with the parties concerned, to rationalize those items. We emphasize here two principles: the method of consultation and the agreement of the States parties to a particular item.

My delegation supports the proposal by the President of the General Assembly to concentrate general discussion at the beginning of the session on a specific issue or theme; this approach has been successfully used by the Non-Aligned Movement in its recent conferences and summits. My delegation has studied the proposal made by the President of the General Assembly concerning scheduling the discussion of the items of the General Assembly and agrees that it is an important proposal and will alleviate the burden of many countries with small delegations if it is done in an accurate and solid manner. We call for scheduling the meetings of the Main Committees of the General Assembly throughout the year so that the meeting of a particular Committee could be held in one month every year or during a specific period, in accordance with the traditional method followed at the inauguration of every session, holding the general debate in the month of September.

My delegation supports the proposal of strengthening the capabilities and potentials of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. We also support what was contained in the statement of the NAM representative in this connection. We could also establish a specific unit in the Secretariat whose staff would help the President of the General Assembly during each session.

In conclusion, Mr. President, my delegation would like to emphasize that the general framework proposed in your paper must concentrate on procedures and on improving working methods, because this is the only way to attain the principal objective of this process, which is to enhance the role of the General Assembly and to revitalize its role in accordance with the Charter. My delegation will cooperate fully with you to safeguard the success of your efforts. I would like to express my thanks to Ambassador Abdallah Baali, the representative of Algeria, for his efforts to coordinate the positions of the NAM States.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): The changes that we see today in the international community are frequent and increasingly more dynamic. Every day we face new and diverse challenges. As the advancement of globalization has led us to an increasingly more interdependent world, we cannot fail to recognise the effectiveness of a viable multilateral framework in taking on these challenges. The United Nations, we believe, is the best tool available to the international community.

The relevance of this tool, however, depends entirely on its ability to effectively deliver its message to the real world. That is especially true with regard to the ability of the General Assembly to make its opinions heard, as it is the most representative body within the United Nations in that it comprises all the Member States. The General Assembly should also play a key role when the international community takes decisions following legitimate avenues for action. It is against that background that I wish to stress how important it is for us to seriously seek ways and means to let the General Assembly recover the status that the Charter grants it and the role that the Millennium Declaration clearly assigns to it.

In addition, the United Nations must enhance its ability to respond to shifting priorities. The Member States must constantly reassess whether we are meeting with success in devoting our time, energy and resources to our highest priorities so as to produce maximum yield within the given limitations.

First, let me touch upon some of the matters related to the revitalization of the General Assembly that we consider to be of particular importance. This matter actually has been on our agenda since 1990 and we have engaged in numerous discussions from a variety of perspectives. I believe that it is high time for us to take stock of the results of those discussions and to come up with a more comprehensive approach to this matter. In this regard, I would like to pay tribute to the initiatives that the President of the General Assembly is undertaking.

Today, we are here to discuss four agenda items in this joint debate. This is quite a symbolic step forward in our effort to enhance the efficiency of our work by clustering related items. I also would like to commend the efforts made by the President in that direction.

As concerns measures to enhance the authority and role of the General Assembly, we are in favour of strengthening the Office of the President. In order to ensure a smooth transfer and to accumulate institutional memory, the Secretariat should assign one or two persons from among its current staff members to the Office. In our view, it is preferable that an expert with solid knowledge of the substance and precedence of the work of the General Assembly be assigned.

This year, we elected the President in June, which is a remarkable step forward, but three months is still quite short a period in which to fully prepare oneself for that important job and one year is still a very short time frame for the completion of a great deal of substantive work. We therefore propose that we consider the possibility of re-electing the President, as well as the possibility of electing the President from among the Vice-Presidents of the previous year. We are also of the view that the President should further enhance coordination with representatives of other relevant bodies, such as the Main Committees, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General's Office and the regional groups.

The General Assembly should also explore ways to enhance cooperation with the Security Council through the promotion of dialogue with it. In order to realize that, however, it is necessary for us to make our discussions in the General Assembly more interactive and more focused. We must therefore direct our attention to consideration of measures to improve the working methods of the General Assembly.

The need to further rationalize the agendas of both the plenary and the Main Committees has been repeatedly stressed in our discussion. It might be worth giving serious consideration to the introduction of a rule that would enable us to streamline and consolidate agenda items as well as resolutions. For instance, those agenda items concerning which discussion is deferred for a number of years should be deleted from the list. We should also take a hard look at the way in which agenda items are allocated to each Main Committee, for there must be significant room for rationalization in this area.

In the context of agenda reform, I have been paying particular attention to the work of the Second Committee, which, on the basis of resolution 57/270 B, is to reach a conclusion on this topic by the end of the fifty-eighth session. I have already underscored the stagnant nature of the work of the Second Committee in the statement I delivered before the Committee on 6 October.

The role of the Second Committee is becoming more and more important. In the economic, social and related fields, the discussions are often left stranded amid ideological confrontations among groups, without allowing participants even to reach a common understanding of the priorities of their work. In order to produce concrete and positive results, all the countries that take part in those forums must increase their efforts to reconcile their positions and work together.

Resolution 57/301 provides that the regular session will commence in the third week of September, which results in a considerable time squeeze for discussions in the Main Committees. The Third Committee, for example, has to deal with as many as 80 draft resolutions in seven weeks, which is one week less than is allotted in a normal year. I call for the Member States to review this situation and to be flexible enough to return to the previous practice. Another matter for consideration is the possibility of dispersing sessions of the Main Committees, which are currently concentrated in the period from October to December, throughout the year, as was proposed by the Permanent Representative of Singapore, which action we support.

Now I would like to turn to the issues related to the reform and strengthening of the United Nations. We are glad to note that, since the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/300, those actions stipulated in it are being steadily implemented, as is indicated in the Secretary-General's report in document A/58/351.

In the draft programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, the Secretary-General pays particular attention to resource reallocation and proposes to terminate 912 outputs. While commending his efforts, we call for a smaller and more rationalized budget through more strict prioritization of activities and further redeployment of resources away from more

obsolete activities in order to produce maximum output within our limited financial resources.

We also appreciate the concrete initiatives taken since last year with respect to the restructuring of the Department of Public Information and measures implemented for the enhanced effectiveness of the Department's information products and activities, including the promotion of strategic communications services. I would like to encourage the Secretary-General to continue these reforms in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions already adopted concerning public information.

In one respect, reform is the accumulation of concrete, operational measures. Sometimes it involves our everyday behaviours. We, the delegation members, are by no means free from blame; above all, we must not waste our precious resources. For instance, if we start a meeting later than the scheduled time, the interpreters can only stand by idle during that time, and still we are paying them a considerable amount of money. As one hour of meeting time with interpretation in six languages and support services costs $1,875, 20 minutes of delay wastes $625. Supposing we had 10 meetings in the morning and another 10 in the afternoon, all delayed for an average of 20 minutes, we would lose $12,500 a day. If we have 22 working days in a month, the loss amounts to $275,000. We could easily end up wasting $1 million if we went on like that for four months. Hypothetical though this may be, it clearly indicates the critical importance and urgent need of being punctual ourselves if we wish to demonstrate financial accountability for the further promotion of reform.

In another respect, the reform process should take into account more long-term, strategic perspectives. This question relates to how we construct and maintain durable multilateral frameworks with which we can tackle the real problems of the international community.

First, on the matter of Security Council reform, we regret that the discussions in the Working Group established by the General Assembly 10 years ago have yet to produce any significant progress or a way out of the deadlock.

The Secretary-General has proposed that we set 2005 as a deadline for reaching agreement on the changes that are needed in our international institutions. Japan takes this proposal very seriously and holds the view that a political decision should be made at that time through the convening of a meeting of heads of States or Government regarding the reform of the United Nations, and of the Security Council in particular, as proposed by our Foreign Minister during the general debate.

Japan also supports the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities. We will be following those developments with great interest. Japan intends to make the maximum contribution possible to that initiative.

In order for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Security Council to be enhanced, new permanent members need to be added that are both willing and able to shoulder global responsibility. Japan has repeatedly expressed its intention to continue to work actively for the realization of Security Council reform and would like to assume greater responsibility as a permanent member in a reformed Council.

When we talk about true United Nations reform, it is our strong conviction that such reform must lead to a system of world governance that can provide each and every Member with a sense of legitimacy and fairness. Unless a sense of fairness is widely shared among Member States, we cannot hope for the smooth management of the United Nations. Japan believes that achieving appropriate and equitable burden-sharing among Member States must be the focus of our attention.

In this regard, we believe that the scale of assessments should, at an appropriate time, be better balanced and made more equitable, in conformity with each country's actual economic performance, as well as with its status and level of responsibility in the United Nations. In addition, the attainment of equitable geographical distribution among Member States with regard to the number of staff in the Secretariat is long overdue. Severe underrepresentation must be redressed as a matter of priority.

While the deployment of peacekeeping operations should be carried out according to the circumstances specific to each case, we also believe that the budgetary burden for such operations should be kept at a reasonable level for Member States. Special care must also be taken to ensure transparency — particularly vis-à-vis major financial contributors — when making decisions to establish and redesign peacekeeping operations. Some form of dialogue

mechanism with those contributors should be developed.

Finally, the famous four criteria introduced by Ambassador Mahbubani of Singapore are applicable not only to the Security Council but also to the General Assembly and the United Nations as a whole. We must be constantly monitoring our own performance, asking ourselves whether we are managing to handle issues successfully, improving on procedural matters and working methods, being transparent and open among ourselves and enhancing our credibility and prestige with the international community. Reform is a continuous process that requires our devotion and constant effort. Japan is prepared to do its utmost in order to make a significant contribution to that process.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): This debate on strengthening the United Nations system and revitalizing the General Assembly is important, essential and timely. Every institution needs to continue to renew itself in order to stay relevant, efficient and effective. Today, even the Organization's strongest detractors recognize that it is relevant if the old and new challenges which face the international community are to be addressed.

The Secretary-General outlined these challenges in his opening remarks at the inauguration of the Assembly's general debate last month. His call for institutional review and reform was timely. We welcome his initiative to convene a group of eminent personalities to deliberate and make recommendations to him for consideration by Member States. We trust that the composition and work of those eminent personalities will reflect the broad spectrum of views and approaches to reform which exist in this Assembly.

The statement made by Algeria today reflects the broad approach of the Non-Aligned Movement. Pakistan aligns itself with that approach.

We thank Deputy Secretary-General Fréchette for her statement and for her dedicated efforts to preserve and promote the institutional vitality of the United Nations.

Pakistan greatly appreciates the vigour with which the President of the Assembly has devoted himself to promoting the reform process. His informal paper of 17 October provides an invaluable framework and guide for our work on the General Assembly's revitalization.

We must commence by acknowledging that, thanks to the purposeful efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, considerable progress has been made since 1997 in improving the United Nations Secretariat and its support machinery. Pakistan has contributed to this process, especially to human management reform, and we will continue our active participation.

We endorse the Secretary-General's suggestion that attention now be focused on the institutional reform of the intergovernmental organs of the United Nations.

The Assembly discussed the reform of the Security Council recently, and I will not repeat our views on that issue. But in the context of United Nations reform, it is necessary to draw attention to the following considerations. First, the Security Council is progressively extending the scope of its responsibilities far beyond the role — the central role — it was assigned in the Charter to deal with threats to international peace and security. New efforts to entrust the Council with responsibilities for counter-proliferation while ignoring the goals of disarmament is a current case in point.

Secondly, the deliberations of the Council lack transparency and openness, contrary to rule 48 of its provisional rules of procedure. This ethos of opacity on the part of the Council must be changed. It is for the Assembly to insist on that change, here and in the concerned capitals.

While criticism of the Security Council's shortcomings are subdued, assessments of this Assembly are often harsh. Inefficient, ineffective and irrelevant are often the adjectives in a description of the General Assembly. Such harsh assessments ignore history and international politics. The General Assembly has registered many outstanding historic achievements. It played the leading role in enabling the peoples under colonial rule to liberate themselves through the exercise of the right of self-determination. The Assembly has contributed immensely to the evolution of international law and norms. It has addressed issues of peace and security, and opposed aggression and the use of force whenever the Security Council was paralysed by partisan vetoes. It has created institutions for international cooperation in vital fields and convened conferences to mobilize the international community on issues of global priority.

It is not surprising that the Assembly's agenda is long and often overloaded. Each of the States Members of the United Nations has a sovereign and democratic right to bring before the Assembly its difficulties and its despair, its ideas and its initiatives.

Our agenda would be shorter if the problems and issues brought before the Assembly could be speedily resolved. The much advertised irrelevance of the General Assembly has, in fact, been inflicted on it. Transferring consideration of most of the burning issues of our time — terrorism, non-proliferation and disarmament — to the Security Council sucks the political oxygen out of the General Assembly. Enhancing the role of the Assembly is a political, not a procedural exercise.

Sadly, despite their profession of respect for the principle of sovereign equality, some States support proposals to create more restricted bodies — an executive committee, steering committee, or other select and privileged groups — within the General Assembly, ostensibly to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. Such bodies, like the Security Council, may be able to adopt decisions more quickly and perhaps more clearly, but they will lack universality and legitimacy. They will deprive the majority of a voice on the most important issues. They will increase inequality within the United Nations. They will transform the Assembly into a rubber stamp.

This is not to say that procedural improvements should not be made in the General Assembly's work. A number of useful suggestions have been advanced which merit positive consideration.

First, the rationalization of the Assembly's agenda is a desirable objective. Similar items can be amalgamated. Related items can be grouped. Some items which are no longer of interest to any Member State can be eliminated. Several items presently taken up by the plenary could be assigned to a Main Committee. At the same time, the agenda must remain open to the insertion of new issues which may arise. However, it must be borne in mind that the rationalization of the agenda is essentially a political exercise. We should first decide who will review and recommend the agenda's rationalization — the General Committee, friends of the President or a specially created group. Discussions will have to take place in consultation with the States with an interest in the items concerned. And any criteria utilized to guide those decisions will have to be applied equitably.

Secondly, the Assembly can do much to improve the content of its resolutions. We should attempt to restrict ourselves to shorter resolutions, at least on those items which have been previously considered. It could also be a requirement that draft resolutions on old items be submitted and circulated a few days before consideration of the item, so that discussion can focus on the draft resolution rather than become a repetition of general views. On new issues, debates may be necessary before the drafting of decisions.

Thirdly, the Main Committees of the Assembly have developed their own entrenched cultures. There is a need to harmonize their work. There is also need to introduce uniformity in the decision-making process in the various Committees. Some of them work on the basis of consensus. Others resort to voting as a norm. Yet others show a mix of practices.

Fourthly, covering the simultaneous meetings of the plenary and six Main Committees is beyond the capacity of most of the smaller delegations. It also stretches the conference services. Permanent representatives are unable to devote adequate attention to all the issues. As suggested by many from this rostrum, the sequential convening of the Committee meetings, spread from the first of January to the middle of September should be seriously considered. The results of the Committees could be collectively approved in the plenary when it convenes in September for the general debate.

The management of the plenary and the Main Committees through the year should be entrusted to the president of the General Assembly. To enable him to discharge those responsibilities, it seems essential to strengthen the president's executive office.

Another extremely important aspect is cooperation between the Assembly and the other main organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Greater coherence in the work of the three organs will bring synergy to our work. In that context, my delegation has proposed the idea of composite committees whose memberships are to be drawn from the three main organs in order to address complex crises.

Considerable attention has also been devoted to the reform and revival of the Economic and Social

Council. It cannot be revived merely by changing its name. If an Economic and Social Security Council is created, will it be empowered to consider and decide on central issues relating to the management of international economic and social relations? Will its decisions be binding on Member States like the Security Council's and thus be implemented by Member States? In our view, it may be more productive to focus on ways and means to operationalize the responsibility entrusted to the Economic and Social Council under the Charter and in the recent decisions for integrated coordination and follow-up of the major international conferences.

Aside from the question of political will, the decisions of Member States cannot be realized without adequate resources. It is ironic that parsimony is practiced only when it comes to financing the operations and actions of the United Nations. The political and moral justification for constraining the United Nations to virtually zero growth must be questioned. The concomitant of United Nations reform must be the political commitment by all States to fund the approved activities of the United Nations.

Pakistan believes that reform of the budget of the United Nations and the budget formulation process will strengthen the Organization. For us, the most important issue is the end result. We would support a formula that better enables the Organization to achieve its mandates and which ensures an alignment of resources with the priority activities of the Organization.

However, some of the systemic implications of a change in the current budgetary process need to be examined closely.

First, if we were to change the format of the medium-term plan (MTP) and the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), through what mechanism will Member States ensure that all mandates have been translated into implementable programmes and provided the adequate funding?

Secondly, how do we handle the setting of priorities, a function that currently falls within the purview of the CPC? Thirdly, what would be the role of the MTP and who would frame and review it? And if it is to be abolished and replaced by a strategic framework, as is being proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit, which inter-governmental body would frame and review the framework?

We look forward to a substantive and constructive debate on this important item, which has far-reaching implications for the future of our Organization and indeed for inter-State relations. We assure the president of the full cooperation of the Pakistan delegation in evolving positive and generally acceptable decisions to strengthen the United Nations and revitalize the General Assembly.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Secretary-General for pursuing United Nations reform. I also praise him for his reports on the different aspects of United Nations reform and his proposals for streamlining the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees.

I cannot fail to convey my delegation's support for the president's efforts aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly, and we appreciate the non-paper that he circulated. My delegation would like also to associate itself with the statements made by the Ambassador of Algeria as the coordinator of the working group of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Ambassador of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The General Assembly represents the principle of sovereign equality among Member States and manages to bring their representatives together on an equal footing. As such, it offers a unique opportunity for deliberations among all Member States and engagement in cooperation on a broad spectrum of issues at the global level. It is true that the General Assembly often can make decisions based only on the lowest common denominator, but the significance of its decisions arises more from its legitimate and all-encompassing nature. Thus, given the central position of the General Assembly in the United Nations system, it is all the more necessary to ponder and act more effectively, with a view to bringing about appropriate and necessary changes in the way it works.

In fulfilling such a task, my delegation sees merit in grouping revitalization issues in two clusters — the first is on enhancing the authority and the role of the General Assembly and the second is on improving the Assembly's working methods. Those two clusters are, no doubt, interrelated. If Member States demonstrated their political commitment to strengthening the authority and the role of the General Assembly, we believe that its working methods would take on more

importance and could be much more easily addressed. In our view, seeking to ensure a balanced and comprehensive approach to such a delicate exercise requires that such a sequence not be ignored.

The same attitude may be adopted with respect to the reform of the Economic and Social Council. Meanwhile, we face a different set of problems when it comes to the functioning of the Security Council and international financial institutions. We concur with the Secretary-General that decisions may be more easily reached in these bodies, and that in some cases they may have a decisive impact on events in the world. But the difficulty with those decisions is the fact that they are considered less legitimate in the eyes of many nations, especially in the developing world, which feels that its views and interests are not sufficiently taken into consideration in the decision-making process.

We are pleased that, following a long process of negotiation during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, Member States could adopt a resolution by consensus on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Regardless of the complexities involved, we hope that this achievement can enable the United Nations, particularly two of its important organs — the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council — to better respond to the development needs of developing countries through efficient organization of their work, in keeping with the priorities of the international community. In our view, that cannot take place in isolation from past relevant General Assembly resolutions, the ongoing debate on United Nations reform, the need for reflection of macroeconomic perspectives and the strengthening of developmental issues in the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly.

My delegation is also appreciative of the report of the Secretary-General on the review of technical cooperation in the United Nations (A/58/382). We can go along with his conclusions and recommendations, particularly the one that requests the United Nations Development Programme to undertake a review of a few key issues on which the division of labour can be improved. Cooperation, coordination and greater interaction among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, international financial institutions and the regional banks, for increased complementarity and better division of labour have been stressed in numerous decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The main objective of such coordination should be strengthening and building upon existing arrangements for support to developing countries, in accordance with their priorities and, needless to say, under the leadership of the national Government, for greater efficiency and impact.

My delegation has noted the efforts aimed at streamlining publications and reports, as well as planning and managing conferences and meetings. We support consultative processes among the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the Chairmen of the Main Committees for consolidating reports on related topics, on the basis of decisions of the Main Committees, as a means to facilitate debate and reduce documentation, while maintaining balance among various issues.

We support the intensified efforts for simplification and improvement of the planning and budgetary process of the United Nations. The budget document itself has been shortened and attempts have been made to align activities with priorities. It is hoped that these changes, along with efforts to enhance transparency and the quality of information contained in the budget document, will assist Member States in their intergovernmental discussions.

As requested in resolution 57/300, the Secretary-General has recently submitted a more detailed proposal on a shorter, more strategic medium-term plan that is linked to the budget outline and a reinforced system of evaluation and monitoring. The proposal on a single-stage intergovernmental review of the medium-term plan and programme budget has also been clarified. While we look forward to examining all the details of these crucial proposals, along with reviewing the other aspects of the planning and budgeting process, we stress that the results of this comprehensive exercise should ultimately contribute to the strengthening of effective intergovernmental participation at all stages of the process in order to ensure the best results through the effective implementation of mandates.

To better identify and reflect priorities in programmes and activities, we need to ensure that all intergovernmental mandates are incorporated into the medium-term plan as the basic strategic directive of the Organization. Programme planning should continue to be built on legislative mandates, as the determining

factor in this regard, and, therefore, resources cannot constitute the basis for priority setting. Efforts to support the existing coherence between planning and budgeting exercises should, rather, enhance alignment of budget provisions with priorities. In this connection, increased allocation of resources to areas that can contribute to narrowing the widening economic gap between North and South is enormously fundamental. There are compelling arguments that further negligence of such realities would pose severe threats to peace and security in the world.

Reform of the General Assembly and its Main Committees is not only a necessity, but an obligation, in order to rebuild the Organization into a dynamic international institution in the age of globalization. It is a means to achieve the goal of turning the United Nations into an effective universal organization, ready to address contemporary challenges. The principal objective would be to enhance capacities and to strengthen the capabilities of multilateral machinery for collective action in response to global demands and concerns. Hence, reform proposals should refrain from adopting selective approaches and instead present solutions that will enable the United Nations to implement the priorities identified by its Member States.

The high-level panel of eminent personalities proposed by the Secretary-General could contribute to these deliberations if its membership represents an international character and the diversified opinions prevailing within the Organization.

We agree with the Secretary-General that only Member States can take firm and clear decisions on the recommendations of the Panel. Therefore, the terms of reference of such a Panel should underscore the intergovernmental process of decision-making in the United Nations. The consideration of institutional reform as a last resort could also be included in the programme of work of the Panel if that is the only way to realize the aspirations of Member States, particularly developing countries.

In conclusion, we share the view of the Secretary-General that the events of the last year have reinforced his statement that

> "the need for a strong multilateral institution — one dedicated to the service of humanity as a whole — has never been more acutely felt than in the current era of globalization". (*A/57/387, para. 2*)

My delegation, in its turn, reiterates its readiness and commitment to actively participating in achieving that requirement.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): My delegation aligns itself with the statement of the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

During the Millennium Summit in 2000, the largest number of heads of State and Government ever to assemble at the United Nations reaffirmed

> "the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations" (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*)

and called on it to be strengthened so as to play that role effectively. We wish to contribute three concrete proposals on how this mandate could be implemented.

South Africa welcomes the Secretary-General's intention to appoint a blue-ribbon panel that is expected to review the effectiveness, coherence and balance of roles between the principal organs of the United Nations. We are committed to the reform and expansion of the Security Council and the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council. We also are interested in redefining the relationship of the United Nations system with the Bretton Woods institutions, including the World Trade Organization. However, in this debate we wish to make specific proposals only about the revitalization of the General Assembly.

We fully concur with the President's suggested framework for action, which will consider the issue of the revitalization and reform of the General Assembly in two clusters. The first is on enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly, and the second is on improving the working methods of the General Assembly. We believe that these issues are interrelated and must be addressed in a comprehensive and coherent manner.

Frankly, the machinery of this Assembly has become cumbersome and overburdened with an ever-growing agenda. Its working methods do not allow for flexibility to address the ever-changing global agenda. The United Nations of the twenty-first century requires

leadership that is allowed room to be proactive, creative and not constrained by procedures that were designed for the post-Second World War period. It is therefore not sufficient to lament the lack of authority of the General Assembly and its diminished role in relation to the Security Council and other principal organs. We carry the solemn responsibility to restore the General Assembly as the chief deliberative policy-making body of the United Nations by addressing the reasons for the erosion of its authority.

Member States would have to concede that it is difficult, if not impossible, to address more than 170 resolutions in a plenary session that lasts only 13 weeks. After all, there are probably few, if any, of the Parliaments of the Member States that address their national priorities in sessions of less than three months.

Our rules of procedure certainly do not limit the General Assembly plenary session to between September and Christmas Eve. My delegation is aware that a special committee in 1971 did not endorse a suggestion that the session of the General Assembly be divided into two parts. However, since then the United Nations has expanded and its agenda has grown tremendously. The General Assembly does meet from September of one year to the following September. However, we would be disingenuous if we did not admit that the real attention is paid to issues considered from September to December, which is the reason we all want our resolutions introduced during this period.

Therefore, we agree with the Non-Aligned Movement's working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly that we should consider dividing the Assembly's plenary sessions into two parts. We believe that Member States can easily dedicate a second plenary session of the General Assembly to be held in the weeks or months beyond Christmas Eve and before the following September. Outside of those two dedicated plenary sessions, the General Assembly would still be available to meet in plenary and to address any emergency issues that might arise.

Another reality we face is that more than 80 per cent of our missions have less than 10 officials, including administration and office staff. Therefore, in simultaneously scheduling meetings of the General Assembly plenary, the Main Committees — as we are doing this afternoon — the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and even regional and other groups, we ourselves are making it impossible for the majority of United Nations Members to participate in the business of the Organization, such as we are conducting right now. As a result, this raises questions as to whether we are able to take decisions that are inclusive and relevant to the rest of the international community.

It is for these reasons that my delegation would propose that we consider the sequencing of Committee meetings so as to allow as many delegations as possible to participate in the decision-making process. Having two dedicated General Assembly plenary sessions would allow Committees to spread their work over a longer period. It would also reaffirm the purposes for which the Main Committees were created, that is, to conduct thorough analyses and assessments of and to propose policy responses to the many complex challenges facing the United Nations.

Also, we believe that it is essential for us to redefine the role and purpose of the plenary sessions of the Assembly. We urge that consideration be given to holding General Assembly plenary meetings infrequently, perhaps even a few times a month. This would allow the plenary to be dedicated to important current debates, including focusing on thematic debates. Calling for almost daily plenary meetings to discuss virtually every issue on the calendar makes it hard for delegations — much less for the world at large — to focus on those discussions.

We can all recall the few occasions when the General Assembly plenary has dedicated significant time to an important issue and when all missions, big and small, have participated and even the world at large has followed our deliberations with interest. A recent example was the resumed tenth emergency special session held this past week, in which, for one afternoon and late into the evening, the General Assembly discussed in plenary the issue of the separation wall that Israel is building in Palestine. The impact and decision of that debate was felt throughout the world.

For us to revitalize the debates of the General Assembly plenary, we would have to agree on issues to be scheduled for these plenary meetings. If, for example, we agree that the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the Millennium Summit is important, we must schedule a General Assembly plenary meeting, in which everyone can have an opportunity to attend and participate. That might mean

that we would agree to adjourn the work of the Committees and of the Security Council so as to allow all Members to participate in such an important plenary debate. That would require us to be creative and to prioritize our work if we wish to have an impact and pronounce on the changing global agenda. The fact that, right now, some of us may think that is an impossible goal to achieve may be one of the reasons we have failed in reforming and revitalizing the General Assembly.

In conclusion, allow me to restate the three concrete proposals we wish to contribute to this debate. We should seriously consider extending the General Assembly session beyond Christmas Eve; there should be sequencing of the work of the Main Committees so as to allow greater democratic participation and decision-making; and we must reserve General Assembly plenary meetings for debating important global issues.

None of those concrete suggestions can take effect without the leadership of the President of the General Assembly. My delegation is pleased that we elect the President two or three months before the next session begins. Now we must look into providing the incoming President with all the necessary resources and tools — including a temporary office with Secretariat support — which would allow the incoming President to prepare for the upcoming session. That, we believe, would enable the President to hit the ground running.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): We support the statements made this morning by the representative of Algeria, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; by the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; and by the representative of Suriname, on behalf of the Caribbean Community. We wish only to emphasize a number of points that the delegation of Jamaica considers to be of importance.

In the course of the general debate, concluded last month, a common theme was the need for a strengthening of the United Nations. An important dimension of that is the reform and revitalization of the organs and institutional arrangements of the system. We have already expressed our views on the question of reform of the Security Council, which is a paramount and urgent priority. Of equal importance is revitalization of the General Assembly, which does not need reform as much as a reassertion of its authority and mandate. As provided in Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter, it should play a pivotal role in the management of the international system. We do not contemplate any Charter amendment, but rather practical measures to restore its status and role, which might require some changes in the rules of procedure. We should like to suggest some of those lines of action.

First, revitalization should mean a more active Assembly. We should increase the holding of scheduled Assembly meetings throughout the year by way of distributing the agenda over time and addressing critical issues as they arise. That could happen at least at quarterly intervals. Those should include at least one session devoted especially to substantive consideration of economic development issues, bringing together all relevant agencies within the United Nations system. That should become an occasion not just for debate and exchange of views, but also for the formulation of common principles to guide economic cooperation and development policy with respect to trade, finance and technology.

In the area of peace and security, there is room for the Assembly to play a more active role throughout the year in reviewing the work of the Security Council to preserve the principle of accountability, in keeping with the provisions of Article 24 of the Charter. Meetings could be held on the basis of special reports requested when the Council has been unable to act on matters affecting international peace and security by virtue of a deadlock in the decision-making process. Special meetings might also be necessary when the Council is authorizing enforcement action, since such decisions are binding on all Member States. If that is done, we would have a more active Assembly more directly involved in the management of global affairs, as envisaged in Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter.

Second, revitalization should restore the authority of the Assembly in the areas of its competence. We see two things that should be done. To begin with, the holding of thematic debates in the Security Council should be discontinued. These generally concern matters that should be left for debate and resolution in the General Assembly. Our view is that the Security Council's ambit of responsibility is generally described in Articles 34 and 39. We believe that thematic debates constitute an encroachment on the areas of responsibility of the General Assembly, which is empowered to decide on policies and programmes in relation to those issues.

Our other concern is with respect to the assignment to international conferences of subject matters that ordinarily have to be dealt with at special sessions of the General Assembly. What has resulted is that, in many areas of social and economic affairs, the reference points for international policy are international conference decisions, not resolutions of the General Assembly. That has weakened the Assembly's role as the authentic voice of the international community in relation to such matters.

The third area of action would be in the strengthening of the office of the presidency. That means incorporating the presidency into consultations affecting all important initiatives and activities within the United Nations system. We should also be able to deploy the President as the representative of the United Nations at international consultations and meetings of various bodies at both the regional and specialized levels and at meetings with world leaders. There is an opportunity to develop an outreach programme that would bring the United Nations into closer contact with the world outside to increase visibility and public awareness of developments in the United Nations. That would necessarily entail the provision of greater staffing and financial resources for the presidency. The current level of resources provided from the regular budget does not allow for any active role or much room for outreach activities.

Fourth, revitalization requires more substantive decision-making by the General Assembly. Regrettably, in recent years the decisions of the General Assembly have become increasingly devoid of substance. That is due largely to the tendency to seek a consensus based on the lowest common denominator. The result of that is the passage of resolutions with studied ambiguity in their language, which fail to give a clear, positive direction in matters of international cooperation. Very often, such decisions are patchwork formulations of what is called agreed language — extracted from negotiated texts from conference outcomes — and do not reflect the needs of a changing international situation. Our view is that there is a need to develop a better approach to decision-making, in keeping with the democratic principles of Article 18 of the Charter.

Fifth, revitalization should mean a greater focus on implementation. We believe that there should be a special mechanism in the Secretariat for the monitoring of the implementation of General Assembly decisions, and special focus in the reports of the Secretary-General identifying the problem areas.

Sixth, revitalization should bring improvements in the working methods of the General Assembly. In this respect, we generally support two broad initiatives.

First, we support the attempt at rationalization of the agenda by redistributing items either through a biennial or triennial cycle and, where necessary, by retiring items which may no longer have currency or by arranging for mergers between related items, so as to rationalize the agenda.

Secondly, we support arrangements for an interactive format for debates on agenda items. We believe that there is a need for change from the dull monotony of prepared statements. One strategy would be to use structured panels, which has two advantages. It would bring more expert information and analysis to assist Member States on particular subjects, and it would also stimulate more interactive discussion based on the material so provided.

My seventh point is the recognition that an important dimension of revitalization is a political revitalization on the part of Member States, who must adhere to the obligations and commitments of the multilateral process and participate in an open and transparent way through a full exchange of views in an atmosphere of respect, cooperation and goodwill.

Such a revitalization in participation is important to ensure that the system works for all of us. The gradual marginalization of the General Assembly over the years is, to a large extent, the result of our own negligence and of some degree of complacency and acquiescence. What is needed now is for a new spirit, a new commitment and a new energy to infuse the multilateral system. We therefore consider it important that whatever revitalization measures we agree on be accompanied by a political declaration reaffirming multilateralism and a commitment to energize the role of the General Assembly.

In closing, I wish briefly to comment on restructuring and revitalization in the economic, social and related fields. In our view, there is considerable scope for reform to ensure that overview, direction and coordination in the economic fields can become more effective. We are fortunate that, under the current leadership of the Economic and Social Council, reform is being pursued. I feel, however, that we are

handicapped by not having a specific mechanism to channel and coordinate all initiatives for reform. We feel that, in the light of all that is happening, it would be appropriate to create an ad hoc committee to examine and report on current initiatives for consideration before the closure of the fifty-eighth session.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): I should like to focus on agenda item 55, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". My delegation would like to congratulate Mr. Hunte for the efforts he has made since assuming the presidency to introduce a fresh approach and dynamism to the consideration of this item. The resourcefulness, innovativeness and determination that he and his team have brought to this exercise augur well for the emergence of a dynamic and revitalized General Assembly.

My delegation is convinced that his decision to begin consultations on this highly important question right from the very beginning of his presidency was a move in the right direction, one that has generated a renewed interest among delegations in coalescing around the presidency in order to achieve concrete results aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly. We are extremely encouraged by that move.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Algeria, in his capacity as Coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on the Reform of the United Nations and the Revitalization of the General Assembly, and by the Permanent Representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Given the importance of this item to my delegation, I wish to add and emphasize a few points. I should like also to congratulate the various speakers who took the floor earlier who made some very, very pertinent points.

Malaysia fully subscribes to the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the questions of strengthening, restructuring, revitalizing and democratizing the United Nations, as contained in paragraphs 26 to 33 of the Final Document of the thirteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Kuala Lumpur from 20 to 25 February 2003. Malaysia also fully subscribes to the position of the Group of 77 on these questions, as contained in the Declaration of its Ministerial Meeting, convened in New York last month.

In our discussions on this very important issue, three words and concepts are often used: revitalization, restructuring and strengthening. I would simply like to remind myself of the meaning of these words. The Oxford dictionary offers the following definitions of these words: revitalization means "to put new life"; restructuring means "giving a new or different structure or arrangement"; and strengthening means "causing something or somebody to become stronger".

I think that we all are in agreement that we need to put new life into the General Assembly. There is the view that much of the oxygen has been sucked out of it. There is also probably the view that the General Assembly has become lethargic and is losing its memory, its hearing and its teeth. There is also the view that the General Assembly needs a new, or possibly a different structure or arrangements. What is most important is that we are all in agreement as to the need to prescribe the General Assembly a new blend of tonic, however bitter it might be.

We all know exactly what the problems and symptoms are. We all have ideas on what needs to be done. We all are fully aware of the final destination that should be reached in this process. We have a possible road map for reaching it, in the form of the informal note that the President has prepared, as well as other existing documents, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, the Millennium Declaration and relevant General Assembly resolutions.

My delegation sincerely hopes that, with the current momentum and under the leadership of Mr. Hunte all Member States can come together to begin a process of genuine change, revitalization and strengthening, which would truly have an impact on making the work of the General Assembly more efficient and effective, so that its voice can be heard and its decisions respected and implemented.

Articles 10 to 17 of the Charter of the United Nations clearly outline the functions and powers of the General Assembly. Numerous resolutions have also been adopted by the Assembly over the years that are aimed at enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness, including as concerns its methods of work. We note that most of the provisions of those resolutions have been successfully implemented. However, there are some important ones which have not. The President's efforts to implement the relevant provisions is a good start, and we welcome it.

We have noted the background document prepared by the Secretariat on the chronology and analysis of the relevant General Assembly resolutions. We think that one of the immediate tasks before us should be to review this question and find ways and means to ensure that past decisions and resolutions can be implemented, taking into account the fact that it may be necessary to make certain modifications in accordance with changing circumstances.

In this connection, my delegation would like to suggest that the Secretariat, in particular the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, be requested to monitor the implementation of all resolutions of the General Assembly, as well as to help ensure the application of the relevant Articles of the Charter relating to the work of the General Assembly. We could agree on the need for Member States to be more accountable in initiating draft resolutions and in monitoring the implementation of resolutions once they have been adopted. It is for us, the Member States, to ensure the effectiveness of the General Assembly. We have to ensure that the Assembly's decisions and recommendations are followed up, complied with and implemented sincerely and wholeheartedly by all parties concerned. My delegation believes that we would be moving in the right direction if the sponsors of resolutions played a more responsible role in ensuring not only ownership, but also follow up, accountability and implementation.

Obviously, there is a need in the revitalization exercise to examine the resolutions churned out by the General Assembly annually. Between the fifty-first session and the fifty-sixth session, the number of resolutions increased from 311 to 360. What is important is not the number of resolutions but the need for them to be more concise and focused. Ensuring their actual implementation by Member States, the Secretariat and others should be our primary consideration. In this regard, the experience of work done in other international bodies and in national parliaments might be instructive for us in the General Assembly.

One of the issues that need to be looked at closely in the revitalization process is that of reports and the reporting process. Relevant General Assembly resolutions need to be reviewed in order to allow for an honest assessment on the part of Member States with regard to, for example, whether it would be in the interests of everyone to continue with the practice of requesting the Secretary-General to produce more reports every year. Further improvements could be made to the reporting process.

My delegation would like to add its voice in support of the view that the office of the President should be further strengthened. We must do all we can to ensure that this can be achieved, including by ensuring the provision of adequate financial and other resources. We commend the effort of the President to have a corps of experienced diplomats and experts within his cabinet to assist him in his work during this session of the General Assembly. But that, of course, is not enough. The presidency should be supported by adequate resources and staff from the Secretariat. Previous General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 51/241, need to be reviewed and re-examined in the effort to strengthen the role of the President of his office.

On the question of the methods of work of the General Assembly, my delegation welcomes the idea of having some of the interconnected and cross-cutting agenda items debated jointly, and agenda items biennialized or triennialized. We should be more circumspect, however, in promoting joint debate on items that are considered critical, such as those we are dealing with today. We would not do justice to many of these items by having them debated jointly, with a seven-minute time limit per speaker — especially if those items generate wide interest and warrant specific and focused discussion with a view the adoption of important decisions. Having such items jointly debated may not necessarily enhance the effectiveness of the work of the General Assembly. What is required is wide and deep interest in those items and in the adoption of appropriate resolutions and decisions by the General Assembly relating to them.

My delegation is supportive of the idea that the programme of work of the General Assembly be scheduled for the whole 12-month duration of each session, rather than concentrating it into the period September to December, as is the current practice. To restore its central position as the chief deliberative, policy-making and universally representative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly could revise its current programme of work to allow for greater participation of all delegations, in particular the smaller delegations from the developing countries.

Instead of having one regular session, the General Assembly could be convened in two or three regular sessions throughout the year. Such an undertaking could result in a more manageable General Assembly, including with regard to the work of the Main Committees, thereby increasing and enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, Member States with limited human and financial resources would be able to participate and contribute more actively and meaningfully. Such States, most of which are from the developing and least developed countries, are equally important stakeholders in the work of the General Assembly. They should be able to participate meaningfully and democratically in deliberations and the adoption of decisions on a majority of the Assembly's agenda items which are of direct and immediate concern and interest to them.

It appears that over the years the Main Committees have successfully transformed themselves, in a gradual manner, into individual entities in their own right — each with its own deep-rooted corporate culture and tradition. In certain instances, unwritten customs and traditions appear to take precedence over the rules of procedure of the General Assembly in the work of some Committees. In the interests of preserving the role, status and prestige of the General Assembly as a whole, in accordance with the relevant Articles of the Charter, such a development must not be allowed to continue. Any work done to revitalize the Committees should not be a piecemeal effort. It must be part of the comprehensive exercise which we are now undertaking.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reassure the President of our continued readiness to support him and cooperate with him, as well as with other delegations, in bringing about the much needed revitalization of the General Assembly. My delegation is optimistic that under his able and proven leadership, we will be able to achieve our objective within a clear time frame. We count on his leadership and on the political will of all Member States to enable us to achieve the desired results.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala aligns itself fully with the statements of the representatives of Morocco, Algeria and Peru, who spoke, respectively, on behalf of the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Rio Group. We need not repeat what has already been said, and will accordingly restrict ourselves to one aspect that, in our judgement, has been insufficiently explored. I am referring to the formal and informal links that exist between the three main intergovernmental organs established by the Charter. In this regard, it would probably be best to consider the three agenda items with which we are dealing at today's meeting in an integrated manner.

Indeed, our debate would gain much if, instead of examining the revitalization of the General Assembly on the one hand and the reform of the United Nations on the other, we were to approach the consideration of the issue in a systemic manner. Much of the criticism levelled at the General Assembly springs from the weaknesses in the way in which this body interacts with the Security Council. In the same vein, overlap and duplication between the work of the Second Committee and the Economic and Social Council have been the subject of frequent comment in this Hall.

In this regard, we applaud the Secretary-General's appeal, on 23 September, for us to adapt the United Nations to the new circumstances being faced by humanity. The core of such reform is undoubtedly the transformations to be made to the Organization's system of governance, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

While the panel of eminent personalities to be appointed by the Secretary-General prepares its report for our consideration at the fifty-ninth session, there are some concrete steps that we can take to move in the direction that the report will most likely point. We already have some clear, though partial, hints from the reports submitted by the Secretary-General, including his original proposal contained in document A/57/387 — which, however, avoids the intergovernmental aspects — and the reports contained in documents A/58/351, A/58/382 and A/58/395, which we welcome.

On the other hand, we are not starting from zero. We should recall Assembly resolution 57/300, as many preceding speakers have done. Also on the issue of the reform of the budgetary programming process, we have the valuable report of the Joint Inspection Unit, contained in document JIU/REP/2003/2.

In that context — and recalling my original comment that we need to reflect more thoroughly on the links between the different organs — there is no doubt that the preparation and execution of the budget,

which is the prerogative of the General Assembly, is the single most important instrument for carrying out the mandate contained in the Millennium Declaration:

> "To reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations ..." (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*).

In what other areas can we promote progress on the revitalization not only of the General Assembly but also of the other organs? I would like to cite several examples that, in our view, point in the right direction.

First, the General Assembly took an important step in adopting resolution 57/270 B on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. It is important not only because of its substantive content but also because it offers an interesting mechanism for cooperation on this crucial issue between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Something similar can be said about the follow-up activities of the International Conference on Financing for Development. As will be recalled, paragraph 69 of the Monterrey Consensus entrusts very concrete and mutually supportive roles to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. This very same week, we are holding the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, which builds on both the Secretary-General's report and the results of the 14 April meeting of the Economic and Social Council, the Bretton-Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. Only the activities of the follow-up to conferences, in particular the Monterrey Consensus, offer the possibility of rapprochement between those two principal organs in very concrete activities and, consequently, in the revitalization of the Organization.

Similarly, there has recently been progress in defining a shared working relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council on the issue of reconstruction and development in countries emerging from conflict. The creation of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict has permitted a shared effort between the two Councils on the question of Guinea-Bissau. It is hoped that this will also take place in the case of Burundi.

On the other hand, it is more difficult to determine the tasks to be shared between the General Assembly and the Security Council, despite the fact that the Assembly elects the non-permanent members of the Council and that Article 24 of the Charter clearly states that the Council acts on behalf of the Members of the General Assembly. But therein lies precisely one of the lacunae that the President of the General Assembly tried to address with the lucid proposals contained in his informal note circulated on 15 October, which served as the basis for our informal consultations of 17 October. We sincerely thank him for that. We believe that the steps already taken by the President, as well as the proposals he has now made, deserve our recognition.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): I am pleased to address the General Assembly today on the critical topic of strengthening the United Nations. I join others in thanking the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General Fréchette for their efforts to pursue and implement reform of the United Nations. We also wish to offer our appreciation to President Hunte for taking the initiative on this urgent issue and for his summary of the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

The world's leaders created the United Nations 58 years ago out of the ashes of world war. By building on the lessons of the past, the United Nations has become the central multilateral institution of international relations. Now, a new age calls for the United Nations to assume new obligations and responsibilities. However, like the Headquarters building itself, renovations will be needed to make this institution and its operations a modern and effective Organization that can fulfil its mandates in the twenty-first century, especially implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

We think the place to begin is with principles, since reform for the sake of change alone is to take action without a context or framework for our work. We believe there are seven principles that should guide our reform work.

The first principle is responsibility. Since 11 September 2001 we have urged every country to consider the future of our world if terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continue unabated. Every nation needs to fulfil its inherent

responsibility as a member of the international community to stop these global dangers.

The second principle is accountability, which means that membership in United Nations bodies, especially the Security Council, should go to those that shoulder the burdens. Those nations with fiscal responsibility should have a greater say in establishing programmes and budget priorities.

A third principle is effectiveness. We need to consolidate and rationalize both the structure of the United Nations Secretariat and the intergovernmental process, with its maze of committees, agencies, conferences, programmes and commissions.

A fourth principle entails the stewardship of financial resources. The intended beneficiaries of United Nations programmes must in fact benefit from them. Poorly performing agencies or programmes should improve or be ended, thus freeing up resources to be better spent on helping those in need.

The fifth principle is modernization. Nations in the United Nations caucus by region to establish candidacies. As the European Union expands, the composition of the West European and other States group and the East European group will change. Regional groups may need to realign, but they will also need to respect the principle of accountability when proposing candidates for the Commission on Human Rights or the Security Council, among others.

The sixth principle is credibility. Members of all United Nations bodies should reflect the purposes of those bodies. Sanctions should count. States subject to them should not be eligible to serve on the Security Council just as human rights abusers should not sit on the Human Rights Commission.

Finally, the seventh and perhaps most important principle is freedom. Advancing freedom should infuse everything the United Nations does, for liberty is essential to every significant human endeavour. United Nations programmes should be designed to help individuals secure their political and civil rights, promote the Monterrey Consensus, extend the rule of law and provide the benefits of economic freedom, good governance and democracy.

Bearing these principles in mind, we welcome the Secretary-General's call for a panel of eminent persons to make reform recommendations from outside the Organization, thereby bypassing the restraints that have made change from within more difficult. While there have been similar efforts in the past, such as the 1986 eminent persons report to the forty-ninth General Assembly, there are three new factors that make this effort more compelling now than at any time since 1945.

The first factor is this Secretary-General's personal commitment to reform and reinvigorate the Organization to meet the rapidly changing circumstances and challenges of our times. Second is the broad-based recognition among Member States that the United Nations as an institution has vastly expanded its scope, range and volume of work over the past decade and that the current intergovernmental machinery and procedures are not able to respond quickly and effectively to the new and demanding issues before us. And third is the clear-cut determination of Member States to address the lack of coordination among all of its activities as an indispensable step to reforming the United Nations overly complex structure, processes and intergovernmental machinery.

Any effort to reform the United Nations should take a comprehensive look at the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council and the relationships among them. The Secretary-General made clear in his speech on 23 September to this Assembly that a rebalancing among the United Nations pillar institutions is needed to keep them vital and effective. We agree in terms of re-evaluating the agendas of the Security Council, General Assembly, and Economic and Social Council to bring them in line with the purposes and principles ascribed to them in the Charter of the United Nations. While we await the panel of eminent persons' proposals on Security Council reform, we can act now to implement some practical steps by adopting best practices that would sharpen the Security Council's agenda and consequently reduce the number of its meetings and possibly the number of its resolutions.

We all agree the General Assembly needs to be reformed and revitalized. But we think practical steps can be taken now to improve its work as well. For example, on the agenda, we call for expediting the clustering of issues, bi-annualizing and tri-annualizing items and most importantly, giving the General Committee and the President of the General Assembly greater authority to propose termination of agenda items. We also agree with some suggestions that the

General Committee could and should function as a bureau for the General Assembly.

We believe the General Assembly should become less of a speech-making body and more of an interactive and deliberative forum.

We also believe that incorporating the practice of the International Labour Organization — which adopts resolutions with only action-oriented operational paragraphs and no preambular paragraphs — would save considerable time, energy and resources.

Overall, we should harmonize the culture and working methods of all six Main Committees of the General Assembly to avoid duplication and overlap.

In the First Committee, the United States has put forward an improvement initiative to infuse new approaches and working methods in the Committee that reflect the challenges of our times and cast aside the old cold war disarmament agenda.

In the Second Committee, the United States has also proposed reforms to bring the vision and commitments of the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development into the programme of work.

Since the Economic and Social Council, as currently constituted, neither effectively oversees its subordinate institutions nor monitors implementation of its own resolutions, it too needs fundamental reform.

Finally, I want to say a word on the Secretary-General's considerable efforts to address the United Nations budgetary process in his recent reform proposal. We support his efforts to streamline and integrate this process, which would alter the working relationships of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and the Fifth Committee. While we believe the Committee for Programme and Coordination should be eliminated, we are prepared to discuss the idea of making it the lead body to conduct monitoring and evaluation of programmes, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions the primary body to review details of the budget — and to consider strengthening its role and scope in the budgetary process — and the Fifth Committee an oversight body that would review the broad policy aspects of the Secretary-General's biennial budgets.

Just as we advocated and are working towards results-based budgeting, we also call for results-based management. We offered strong support for General Assembly resolution 57/300, which calls for implementing the Secretary-General's 2002 reform agenda, including important Secretariat reforms in human resources management. We also believe that the Secretary-General's new report on implementation of that resolution offers a clear-eyed assessment of the way forward in fulfilling these measures. In that regard, we urge Member States to consider giving the Secretary-General greater authority to move a fixed percentage of resources and posts among departments, the same executive authority that any minister or president must have to manage the administrative resources of the Governments they lead. This also means that the Secretary-General needs to recommend a far greater number of programmes and activities to eliminate under financial rule 5.6 than the 912 outputs proposed for 2004-2005, out of a total of more than 40,000 outputs in the regular budget.

If we are to reform and revitalize the General Assembly and its subordinate institutions, we also need to consider the number of resolutions we adopt and the way we adopt them in this and other bodies of the General Assembly. For example, there are 22 resolutions on the agenda that deal with the Middle East and Israel and additional resolutions from emergency special sessions that are becoming increasingly routine. We vote on each and every one because we cannot achieve a consensus in this chamber on any of them. We have often stated here and elsewhere in the United Nations that neither the Security Council nor the General Assembly should take positions that predetermine the outcome of peace efforts, or even worse, harm their prospects with one-sided and uneven measures.

We strongly believe that the lack of reform, not the pursuit of reform, will harm the United Nations. If we do not act quickly, with determination and ingenuity, we will squander the opportunity to make this Organization better. We must do it for the sake of those in need today, but even more importantly, we must do it for the sake of those who will need this Organization's help tomorrow. It will not be easy or simple. But it will be our enduring legacy, if we succeed in making the United Nations a more effective and dynamic institution that one day may come close to fulfilling the goals for which it was created.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Recent developments in the international situation have shown us that when it comes to certain problems, our Organization's Member States hold differing views and do not adopt the same approach in resolving those issues. In the multilateral context, the role of the United Nations, which is the only truly universal forum, remains crucial. However, it has become clear that in order to fully assume its role, the Organization must rapidly adapt itself to the international environment of the beginning of the twenty-first century. The need for reform is more pressing than ever.

The President took the Chair.

Switzerland warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative of creating a high-level panel of eminent personalities to examine how to adapt the Organization to the new reality of the twenty-first century. This requires an innovative spirit and the courage to explore new paths. For our part, we would like to see a regular dialogue established between Member States and the panel.

We welcome your efforts and personal commitment, Mr. President, to the revitalization of the General Assembly. Your informal note of 15 October and the consultations you have conducted provide an excellent basis for our work.

You, Sir, have identified two clusters. With respect to the enhancement of the General Assembly's role and authority, we support the proposal for strengthening the Office of the President, enhancing the role of the General Assembly's General Committee and improving the functioning of the Main Committees.

With respect to improving the General Assembly's working methods, my delegation supports the vast majority of your suggestions, Mr. President. One particularly interesting idea that you mentioned is to redistribute the Assembly's work over the entire one-year duration of the session. Furthermore, reflection on a code of conduct, which would separate the flow of statements and the draft resolutions into groups, could be a first step towards reducing our overburdened agenda. In brief, the concrete implementation of those proposals will require greater self-discipline on the part of Member States and the renunciation of narrow special interests for the sake of the greater good.

We welcome the Deputy Secretary-General's statement this morning on progress on the reform measures proposed by the Secretary-General in his report of last year entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", endorsed by resolution 57/300. Nevertheless, we believe that further common efforts must be undertaken to implement the report.

I shall limit myself to two observations on this issue. First, Switzerland supports the strengthening of the application of human rights treaties. It finds the idea of a consolidated report to be of particular interest; such a report would provide a better overall picture of the implementation of our legal obligations on this issue. Furthermore, we deem it essential that the United Nations regular budget provide sufficient resources for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to cover the costs incurred by the various bodies monitoring the treaties and the special procedures of the Commission for Human Rights.

Secondly, we support the Secretary-General's recommendations to streamline and lighten the Organization's planning and budgeting process. The proposed strategic framework, consisting of a two-year medium-term plan in conjunction with an adapted, more operational budgetary outline will make for a more coherent and strategic cycle. We believe it is necessary and important to establish a clear and logical link between the medium-term plan — which should be made a genuine plan of action — and the budget outline. That measure would, we hope, more closely link political priorities and budgetary planning.

Reforming the planning and budgeting cycle should also include the review of the tasks of the various bodies involved, such as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. With our increasingly burdened agendas, we cannot afford to permit several committees to take up the same question without clearly contributing added value.

It has been 13 years since the debate on United Nations reform was launched. It is time to move forward with more thorough changes. We must take advantage of our current momentum and show the required political will.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): I am grateful for the opportunity to share some reflections on behalf of the delegation of Guyana in the joint debate on agenda items 55, 57, 58 and 59. In so doing, I associate my delegation fully with the statements made by the representatives of Algeria, Morocco and Suriname, speaking respectively on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China and the Caribbean Community.

Guyana joins in the support expressed for your efforts, Mr. President, to advance the process of revitalizing the Assembly. We welcome the initiative you have taken to implement those decisions of the Assembly which it is possible to advance at this time and your commitment and determination to develop, in consultation with Member States, proposals leading to the further revitalization of the Assembly.

The framework for action that you, Sir, have elaborated provides a sound basis for our work. Consideration of the revitalization issue has been conveniently grouped into two clusters: enhancing the role and authority of the General Assembly and improving its working methods. We support that framework.

In reviewing the process so far, we note that the question of the revitalization of the General Assembly has been on the agenda of this body for at least the past 13 years. The related questions concerning the strengthening of the United Nations system — measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields and United Nations reform — have also engaged our attention over the past decade. There can be little doubt that, as a result of those efforts, progress has been made in enhancing the efficiency and functioning of the Organization and in improving the working methods of its principal organs.

With respect to the General Assembly itself, more than 15 resolutions and decisions have been adopted whose primary aim is rationalizing its work and improving its procedures. In spite of those developments, the Assembly still struggles to answer the charge that it is failing to fulfil the mandate envisaged for it in the Charter of the United Nations. That is the central challenge facing the revitalization process.

The ultimate test of our success in meeting this challenge lies not in how well the Assembly works internally, but rather in whether it makes a difference in the world commensurate with its role under the Charter and with the vision of our leaders, who called in the Millennium Declaration for the restoration of the Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations. Of course those two things are not unrelated. However, as the experience of the past 13 years shows, the attention to rationalization and improvement of working methods has not necessarily led to an enhancement of the role and the authority of the Assembly. My delegation therefore holds the view that the Assembly must now make simultaneous, concerted efforts under both of the clusters that you have identified, Mr. President. And we are encouraged to believe that, with good will on all sides, this is an undertaking well within our grasp.

Let me now suggest, from the perspective of the Guyana delegation, some of the possible areas where progress can be made during the current session. In this regard, Sir, I will focus my remarks within the framework of the two broad areas that you have set out.

In respect of efforts to enhance the authority and role of the General Assembly, I wish to highlight the following points. First, strengthening the role and the Office of the President should be integral to the process of revitalization. My country, having once held the presidency of the Assembly, supports efforts to strengthen the role and Office of the President, including by making available to it the permanent support of a modest cadre of professionals.

Secondly, my delegation supports efforts to enhance the visibility of the General Assembly. The global perception of the Assembly and of its relevance is determined in large measure by the media attention it receives. We support the initiative for more active engagement by the Department of Public Information in promoting the work of the Assembly in this domain. Equally important is the attention that needs to be paid to enhancing the substantive content of the Assembly's deliberations as well as the quality of its outcomes.

Thirdly, in our view, the relationship among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council is critical in any effort to strengthen the Organization as a whole. With regard to the relationship between the Assembly and the Security Council in particular, some have voiced concern over what appears to be an encroachment on the part of the Council on areas deemed to be within the purview of

the Assembly. Others have attributed this to the inability of the Assembly to address some of the matters on its agenda. Guyana believes that any tendency towards a culture of competition between the General Assembly and the Security Council is to be avoided. We therefore will encourage the Assembly and its President to consider ways of further fostering greater cooperation between the two bodies. Here, the consideration by the Assembly of the report of the Security Council provides a basis for more meaningful interaction between these two organs in accordance with the Charter and relevant resolutions of the Assembly.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Guyana aligns itself with the Rio Group on the necessity of implementing what has been agreed in Assembly resolutions concerning the assessment to be made by the President of the General Assembly on the debate in plenary meeting on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and the report of the Security Council.

(*spoke in English*)

We welcome the steps that you, Mr. President, have taken in that regard.

Fourthly, implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly must be a key objective of the revitalization of the Assembly. This presupposes necessary attention to the quality of decisions adopted by the Assembly, including whether they can, in fact, be implemented. The Assembly may wish to mandate a periodic review of the implementation of its decisions with a view to identifying the problems that hinder implementation.

Turning to the second cluster of issues, my delegation remains committed to efforts to rationalize the agenda of the Assembly and to improve its working methods. We are similarly committed to this exercise in respect of the Main Committees of the Assembly, with a view to enhancing the overall effectiveness of the Assembly's work. In this context, we wish to make the following points.

First, we can support the proposal to programme the consideration of items on the Assembly's agenda over the full year of the session, providing it leads to a rationalization rather than a mere multiplication of the work done over the period from September to December. The Secretariat may assist us with one or more scenarios of how such a session could work.

Secondly, regarding the prioritization of items for special attention, my delegation supports the focusing of efforts, where possible, on issues of global concern. We share the view that plenary meetings could be better utilized by focusing on global priorities of the day. We look forward to further clarification of the criteria and modalities to be applied in selecting items for special attention.

Thirdly, concerning the involvement of external actors, Guyana remains supportive of efforts to involve the wider community, including civil society, in the work of the United Nations, and we encourage further efforts in this regard.

Fourthly, in respect of the role of the General Committee, we support the formalization of the new arrangements introduced by the President of the Assembly at the beginning of the fifty-eighth session.

In sharing these brief reflections at this stage of our deliberations, I wish to close, Mr. President, by once again commending you for the initiative and determination you have shown on this question. You and all the members of the Assembly may be assured of the continued support and cooperation of the delegation of Guyana.

Mr. Ayari (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Tunisia is pleased to participate in the important debate that brings us together today and to make its contribution to international efforts to enhance United Nations action and its performance in the context of the noble principles upon which it is based. We welcome the personal commitment of the Secretary-General and your determination, Mr. President, as well as the commitment of all Member States to strengthen the role of the United Nations and its principal organs — in particular the consolidation of the role and credibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security and the revitalization and consolidation of the role of the General Assembly in the service of peace, security and development.

Today, accelerating reform implementation is more necessary than ever in view of the number of challenges we all face and the need to find more viable and lasting solutions to problems related to peace, security and development, which daily confront the

entire international community. Today's discussion is therefore of particular importance and should enable us to think in more depth about new approaches which will let us regain the spirit of multilateralism that characterized the Millennium Summit.

My delegation completely endorses the statements made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Algeria speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We would like to emphasize, however, a few points we believe deserve particular attention.

Reform is a comprehensive undertaking that must involve all structures of the United Nations, as the Secretary-General observed in his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323) and in his speech to the Assembly (see A/58/PV.7), in which he said that the time had come for radical reform and asked Member States to delay no longer in instituting reforms envisaged for the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council. We support the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in his report as well, Mr. President, as the ones in your non-paper. We give particular support to the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a panel of eminent personalities to advance the reforms. We feel it is essential that the choice of those personalities reflect the broadest possible geographical representation and respond to the indispensable prerequisite of neutrality.

We would also like to emphasize that no reform may be considered without being submitted to the General Assembly for its prior approval. Moreover, the reforms should be fundamental in nature and in keeping with the principles of the Charter; they should give greater weight to the action of our Organization and its decisions and recommendations than to economizing or to placing unjustified pressure on the agendas of the General Assembly and the other principal organs.

The envisaged reform must confirm our shared commitment to promote effective multilateralism which will make it possible to resolve world political problems in a more just and equitable manner, thereby ensuring the advent of an economic and social order in which all countries can live in security and dignity and enjoy the benefits of globalization.

We would like to reiterate in particular how important it is to make the Security Council more democratic, as it is the principal organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security. No reform of the Organization will be complete until the membership of the Security Council is reconfigured, its efficiency and credibility are enhanced and its working methods and decision-making processes are improved. With regard to the right of veto, my delegation supports the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on restricting the use of the veto to action undertaken under Chapter VII of the Charter. It goes without saying that a positive and constructive attitude on the part of the permanent members of the Security Council towards this issue will be essential.

The General Assembly is the Organization's most universal organ. It must remain the central forum for deliberations and decisions on political questions as well as on economic, social and humanitarian issues. We emphasize the importance of helping the General Assembly regain its full powers and attributes as recognized in the Charter. It is certainly true that since a few years ago the General Assembly has become a more deliberative forum, and that the debates that take place there generate insufficient interest outside of its confines. My delegation supports the proposed reforms in the area of rationalizing the programme of work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees and structuring these around the Millennium Development Goals and the results of the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit.

My delegation equally supports the principle of clustering certain agenda items and the submission of consolidated reports on related issues. Biennialization or triennialization of items should be carried out only on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the nature of those items and the aims sought. The Department of Public Information must obviously play a more important role in conveying the activities, recommendations and decisions of the General Assembly through the media. We also support the strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly in order to enable the President to carry out the reform process.

The proposal to consider General Assembly agenda items throughout the year seems to be of interest and should be given some thought. Spreading out the work of the General Assembly in this manner would permit those delegations with limited human

resources to participate more actively in the work of the Assembly.

We attach particular importance to the role of the Economic and Social Council and its impact. We welcome the emphasis placed on the necessity of strengthening that strategic organ mandated to promote coordination and to ensure consistent policies and integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic and social fields. We also support efforts to intensify partnerships and cooperation between the United Nations and the private sector and civil society. We also call for strengthened relations between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions.

We support the recommendations put forward in the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/58/395 and entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change".

My delegation believes no United Nations reform can be successful without widespread political will. This is even truer for the General Assembly to which we are dedicated and to the implementation of whose decisions and recommendations we must all commit ourselves in good faith.

Finally, we would like to stress the importance of avoiding reform being motivated only by budgetary reasons. We favour the gradual introduction and systematic evaluation of reforms. The proposed changes and reforms must respond to the objectives of transparency and equity and should not ever weaken the negotiating capabilities of any group of countries or limit basic documentation or the prerogatives and means available to the Secretariat as it works to promote development.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus views with great interest the present format of jointly discussing four reformulated agenda items. In our view, this practice will enable us to consider the theme in a comprehensive and integral manner which should ultimately help us to adopt balanced decisions with a view to implementing specific measures and proposals.

Debates on reform of the United Nations have been under way for more than a decade. Our common starting point was an understanding that the United Nations was lagging behind world events and was becoming less able to address the new realities. The lack of significant progress on reform of the Organization over the past decade led to a further decline of the international authority of the United Nations and its credibility among Member States. As a result, some countries have chosen to sidestep the United Nations and act unilaterally in solving matters of international concern. This state of affairs undermines the established system of international relations and international law and makes the world less secure. In this regard, the issue of reform of the United Nations is becoming especially acute today.

The situation of United Nations reform largely reflects the existing balance of power in the world. Reform of the Security Council, which is a key element of United Nations reform, might serve as a vivid example. The Republic of Belarus does not doubt the need to redress the imbalance in regional representation on the Council, which infringes on the interests of developing countries. We believe that allocation of additional permanent seats to States representing the three developing regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean is necessitated by contemporary geopolitical realities. But no substantial progress has been made with this issue, as not all States, primarily the most influential ones, are ready to take concrete steps to transform the Council. We consider the successful restructuring of the Security Council to be very important, since failure to reform that organ will give rise to the feeling that it is impossible to reform the United Nations as a whole.

The reform of the Organization is connected with the strengthening of other United Nations Charter bodies, first of all the General Assembly. The main objective in this area is to enhance the efficiency of the Assembly's work. Unfortunately, we have observed the reverse process of late. We consider this a result of the increasing influence of other United Nations entities, specifically the Security Council, on matters that fall under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly. It also happens because the decisions of the General Assembly on both agenda items and matters related to improving its efficiency are not implemented.

In our view, among the various ideas on the revitalization of the General Assembly, particular attention should be paid to proposals such as strengthening of the Assembly's cooperation with the Security Council and other United Nations bodies, increasing the significance of the General Assembly

presidency, improving the consultations of General Assembly President with regional groups and organizations and streamlining the methods and working practices of the General Assembly.

Belarus supports measures to strengthen the status of General Assembly and to reconsider its relationships with other Charter bodies of the United Nations. We should not forget that the General Assembly is one of the main bodies of the Organization, in whose work all Member States take part and which has the right to adopt decisions on practically the whole range of United Nations activities. We are convinced that it is in the interests of all countries to have an influential and effective General Assembly, especially in the context of implementing the functions and powers stated in Article 10 of the United Nations Charter.

Nowadays, there is a widely held belief that not all States can benefit equally from globalization. The economic underdevelopment, poverty, social exposure, illiteracy and perilous diseases inherent in many regions of the world are factors that create propitious breeding grounds for the emergence of conflicts and terrorism. It would not be an exaggeration to say that further delay in tackling the whole range of social and economic problems endangers international peace and security.

In the past, the United Nations has made not a small contribution to the solution of development-related problems. We have no doubt that the United Nations should continue to play such a leading role. In this regard, the Republic of Belarus is profoundly pleased that the United Nations was able to project a strategic vision in this area. At the Millennium Summit the Millennium Development Goals were set, major international forums under United Nations auspices have been held, paths to achieve the goals have been defined and broad international attention has been brought to persistent problems. The next and most important of all steps is the realization of commitments undertaken at these conferences and events.

Although the primary responsibility in implementing development goals rests with the Member States, all of us are entitled to rely on the assistance of our Organization. An active and efficient United Nations involvement in dealing with the issues of development seems improbable without the transformation of United Nations social and economic sectors or without the elaboration and implementation of new approaches to development.

We see one such approach deserving of praise in the consideration this year of the issue of integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development by both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

An important component of the reform of United Nations social and economic sectors is an institutional restructuring of relevant entities of the Organization. We support efforts to consolidate the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) through the provision of the requisite organizational, technical and staff capacity. We find interesting and are ready to consider the proposal of the Secretary-General, made in his report on the work of the Organization (A/58/1), to establish a strategic planning capacity in DESA.

Our delegation shares the opinion, suggested by some States during the general debate of the Second Committee, on the advisability of streamlining the work of the Committee and removing overlapping elements in its activities.

The Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to economic and social matters in the United Nations. To this end, we decided to present the candidacy of our country to the Economic and Social Council at the elections to be held during the current session. If elected to the Council, the realization of the United Nations vision on development, strengthening of the economic and social sector of the Organization and enhancement of the Economic and Social Council's role and its interaction with Bretton Woods institutions would be the areas for our priority action in that body.

I would like to dwell briefly on other reform measures undertaken by the Secretary-General — efforts to improve United Nations activities in the area of public information. Belarus expects that the amount of information products will be expanding and taking into consideration regional specifics. This work should yield an increased interest in United Nations activities on the part of national audiences.

Measures to engage civil society and the private sector on a broader basis in the process of United Nations reform certainly deserve attention. We support meaningful United Nations cooperation with these

structures. However, we believe that this interaction should be organized in such a manner so as not to be detrimental to the basic principles of the United Nations as a universal intergovernmental Organization.

Our delegation takes a positive view of the suggested measures to improve the Organization's planning and budgeting processes, including the consideration of a strategic framework on a biennial basis and the enhancement of the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. We are ready to support the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 that reflects that reform effort.

We also take great interest in the Secretary General's intention, stated in his speech to this Assembly on 23 September, to establish a high-level group with a view to elaborating recommendations on United Nations reform. We hope that serious recommendations on further transformation of the United Nations, which all of us will be implementing together, will be the result of that group's work.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that success in reforming the Organization depends on Member States themselves. To make our planet a safer and fairer world, we, the community of nations, must agree on the future of our Organization. The Republic of Belarus, being a staunch supporter of a comprehensive United Nations reform, is ready for constructive cooperation with interested parties on the whole package of United Nations reform. We see no alternatives to the United Nations central role in the system of international relations.

Agenda item 104

Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development:

(b) High-level dialogue for the implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development

Note by the Secretariat (A/57/CRP.5)

Draft decision (A/58/L.6)

The President: On 15 September 2003, a note by the secretariat was circulated as document A/57/CRP.5 in English only, containing basic information on regional and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and business sector entities applying for accreditation to the high-level dialogue.

Mr. Andrabi (Pakistan): The list of non-governmental organizations that have applied for accreditation to the high-level dialogue on financing for development was included in document A/57/CRP.5 of 9 September 2003. Among them was a non-governmental organization called International Human Rights Observers, Pakistan, which has not been included in the list contained in document A/58/L.6 which is before the General Assembly for consideration. My delegation would like to inquire about the reasons for the non-inclusion of this non-governmental organization in the list before the General Assembly.

The President: In response to the inquiry by the representative of Pakistan, may I state that document A/58/L.6 contains a list of non-governmental organizations which the President has submitted for accreditation to the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development.

Pursuant to paragraph 15 (b) of General Assembly resolution 57/250 of 20 December 2002, interested non-governmental organizations and business sector entities that are not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council or were not accredited to the International Conference on Financing for Development shall apply to the General Assembly for accreditation following the accreditation procedure established during the International Conference on Financing for Development.

As mentioned in a footnote to that resolution, the accreditation procedure for the International Conference on Financing for Development is set out in General Assembly resolutions 55/245 B and 54/279, which Member States will recall was a no-objection procedure.

As this High-Level Dialogue has neither a bureau nor a preparatory committee, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session was obliged to provide the necessary information to the General Assembly directly, which he did in his letter of 7 May and 27 August 2003. In the relevant part, the President's letter indicated that, in the absence of any objection by 8 September 2003, he intended to submit the list to the General Assembly for approval. No Member State disputed the procedure set forth in President Kavan's letter. The President of the General

Assembly at its fifty-eighth session received a timely objection from one Member State in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/250. The name of that organization has been removed from the list.

Mr. Andrabi (Pakistan): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your explanation. My delegation would like to know the name of the delegation and the grounds given for the objection.

The President: The delegation of India objected, and the grounds for the objection are similar to those contained in the document which I circulated to the Assembly. I do not have a copy with me, but I would be quite happy to make this a document of this House.

In any event, I have been advised that I am not, in fact, required to divulge that information. But I think that, in the interests of transparency, I have communicated to the delegation of Pakistan all the information precedent to the President's arriving at that conclusion.

Mr. Andrabi (Pakistan): Mr. President, my delegation appreciates the transparency with which you have conducted the business of the Assembly. We take note of the fact that the delegation of India has blocked the inclusion of this non-governmental organization (NGO) for having held a demonstration against India's illegal and brutal suppression of the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The non-governmental organization, according to news reports, had demanded that the United Nations play an effective role in the resolution of the issue of Kashmir and for peace in South Asia.

We are disappointed, but not surprised, since it is the longstanding policy of India to stifle those voices that question its gross violations of human rights in Kashmir and elsewhere. As a matter of policy, India bars any international human rights organization from visiting Indian-occupied Kashmir or Gujarat, where last year the State machinery helped the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in carrying out the massacre of thousands of Muslims.

Let me be clear: Kashmir is not a part of India. It has never been. Security Council resolution 47 (1948) and 80 (1950) state categorically that the final disposition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir will be made in accordance with the will of the people, expressed through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations.

The United Nations and the international community recognize it as a disputed territory. The United Nations has a direct responsibility to help the Kashmiri people realize their right to self-determination.

According to operative paragraph 15 (b) of General Assembly resolution 57/250, the procedure adopted for accreditation of non-governmental organizations at the Monterrey Conference was to be replicated for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the High-Level Dialogue. The procedure for the Monterrey Conference, contained in paragraph 16 of the report of the Preparatory Committee (A/AC.257/6) of 23 March 2003, was adopted by the General Assembly, while resolution 54/279 mandated that, first, the application should be submitted to a committee composed of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee; secondly, that the Bureau, and not a Member State, would decide, on a no-objection basis, regarding the accreditation of those non-governmental organizations; and thirdly, that the Bureau would inform only the Preparatory Committee.

That procedure did not give a Member State the right of veto. That right was limited to the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, while the general membership, that is, the Preparatory Committee, was only to be informed.

In allowing India a veto to block the Pakistani NGO, a very dangerous precedent has been created. This can be used by any Member State in future to block the participation of any NGO in the activities of the United Nations.

My delegation attaches great importance to the International Conference on Financing for Development and its follow-up process. We do not want to undermine the high-level dialogue and will therefore not challenge the exclusion of that NGO from the list.

The President: I should like to make it clear, again in the interests of transparency, that this is a matter with respect to which the President ensured that he consulted his legal advisers, in the absence of both a preparatory committee and a bureau, and so the decision which was taken on the basis of the objection

that was made was taken with the best legal advice available to me as President.

I wanted to make that point, because, as we talk about change and as we talk about doing things in a more transparent manner, I did not think that I should just rule this matter off without explaining to the General Assembly the procedure that was adopted. The comments made by the representative of Pakistan have been duly noted.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/58/L.6, entitled "Accreditation of non-governmental organizations to the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft decision A/58/L.6?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 58/509).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 104.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.45

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

45th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 October 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 55, 57, 58 and 59 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/786, A/58/175, A/58/351, A/58/382 and A/58/395 and Corr.1)

Mr. Ngo Duc Thang (Viet Nam): My delegation wishes to join previous speakers in commending the Secretary-General for his important and comprehensive reports on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and strengthening of the United Nations system. We highly appreciate the practice of considering those two agenda items in this joint plenary debate. We particularly welcome the President's non-paper on the same subjects, presented at the open-ended consultations held on 17 October. We believe that those documents can serve as a good basis for today's discussion. My delegation would also like to support the statements made by the representative of Algeria, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Working Group on Reform of the United Nations and Revitalization of the General Assembly, and by the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

My delegation has always attached great importance to the ongoing reform process aimed at further strengthening the United Nations and revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. In that spirit, we wish to express our firm support for the Secretary-General's call for radical reform, made at the opening of the general debate, on 23 October. We thank him for his tireless efforts devoted to that difficult task. We believe that many measures and proposals contained in documents A/58/395 and A/58/351 deserve our careful consideration and endorsement. We wish also to commend President Hunte for his strong commitment in taking the lead in pursuing efforts to advance the process of further revitalization of the work and agenda of the General Assembly. My delegation assures the Assembly of its consistent support and full cooperation in that regard.

However, we believe that the United Nations should undertake more effective and practical efforts to earn the confidence and meet the expectations of nations. That requires a stronger and more democratized United Nations and a Security Council with better representation of developing countries and of countries that have made positive contributions to our common objectives. We are also of the view that the current reform efforts within the Organization must

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focus first and foremost on enhancing the General Assembly's authority and role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations, in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

We should like to express our serious concern over the fact that the central role of the General Assembly has been gradually eroding, with its legitimacy being questioned owing to the preference of some to work through the Security Council. We all believe that that situation should be resolved. We welcome all measures aimed at addressing the problem of the General Assembly's relative marginalization, while strengthening the cooperation and effective relationships between the Assembly and other principal organs — particularly the Security Council. The forum of 191 Member States should be the highest authority of the United Nations and live up to the expectations of the world's people in responding to all important and urgent global issues. To that end, we hope that this discussion can help to achieve a breakthrough in our efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the most important organ of the United Nations.

My delegation is of the view that enhancement of the General Assembly cannot be complete unless we rationalize its agenda and improve its working methods. Revitalization has been on the Assembly's agenda since 1991 and has been strengthened by a series of resolutions that have brought about remarkable achievements with regard to reform of the General Assembly and of the Organization as a whole. The Assembly's agenda is now more focused on its substantive work, since many of its items have been regrouped by subject or are considered on a biennial or triennial basis.

However, there is still room for improvement. The president is encouraged to work with the chairs of the Main Committees to consider assigning more items to those Committees in order to preserve General Assembly plenary meetings as a forum for high-level policy statements and for considering agenda items of special political importance and/or urgency. We welcome Assembly President Hunte's initiative in changing the format of his monthly encounters with the chairs of the Main Committees and the Secretariat to ensure a more meaningful exchange of information. In that regard, we fully support the enhancement of the president's role and office to enable them to conduct the business of the General Assembly more effectively.

My delegation would like to express its view the suggestions made at the informal consultations support the current practice of reserving two weeks the general debate, during which leaders of Mer States present their statements on global issues, and combining of items that concern more than Committee in a joint debate. We also support the N Working Group's proposal that the General Asser agenda should be reviewed periodically to consider possibility of deleting any item on which no resolu or decision has been adopted for a certain perio time. Assembly resolutions should be short focused, with particular attention given to implementation. In that regard, we comm President Hunte for the framework of actions conta in his non-paper, and we welcome all initiatives proposals made by other delegations to improve General Assembly's capacity to respond effectivel the challenges of the twenty-first century.

We share the view of the Secretary-Gen expressed in his report contained in docu A/58/395, that a strategic framework should developed to set a direction for the Organizat programmes and budgetary planning so as to ensu strategic connection between programmes and reso allocation. We believe that the formulation of su strategic framework could be very important fo effective shift towards a results-based approach. biennial programme plan should be a policy instru to translate the Organization's legislative mandates programmes. The budget outline should be detailed, with additional information on programm and resource changes.

The Secretary-General's proposal for improved and renamed medium-term plan, comb with an interlinked and expanded budget outline, not only reduce the time needed for their review also ensure an appropriate level of resources allocated to each programme. In order to achieve the objectives and goals set out in the medium plan, we need to strengthen the system of monit and evaluation, as well as enhance the role o Committee for Programme and Coordination. The of that system is self-monitoring and evaluatio each programme manager, which is crucial fo better implementation of the programmes. As a r the Secretariat would report more frequentl Member States on programme performance evaluation. Member States would then be ab

provide them with timely policy guidance for future plans, including any necessary adjustment of resource needs, while considering the reports.

My delegation greatly appreciates the Secretary-General's efforts to develop an implementation plan to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations system in developing countries. We support his intention to strengthen the resident coordinator system and to coordinate all United Nations activities at the country level, as expressed in part VII of his report in document A/58/351. We believe that the annual global resident representative meetings will soon come up with new initiatives to make more efficient use of the scarce United Nations resources allocated for the developing countries. We are looking forward to this implementation being discussed in 2004 at the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that our deliberations will result in constructive contributions that make the United Nations a stronger and more effective international body. In this sprit, my delegation wishes to welcome the panel of eminent personalities appointed by the Secretary-General to examine the current challenges and make recommendations on a broad-based organizational reform. We fully believe that the panel's recommendations, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, as well as those of the Non-Aligned Movement working group on the reform of the United Nations and the revitalization of the General Assembly, will provide sound and objective inputs for the constructive and efficient reform of the Organization.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): Among the suggestions put forward with regard to the revitalization of the General Assembly is that we should avoid repetitive speeches. I will not, therefore, repeat the detailed comments of the Italian presidency of the European Union. France fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the Union.

I would simply like briefly to express France's support for greater balance among the various organs of the United Nations. First, the General Assembly, a universal organ, needs to reassert its position and its authority in its own domain. We believe that it would be damaging to the United Nations system if we failed to fully count on one of its key pillars. Secondly, I would like to refer to the resolute and encouraging action of President Hunte, who can count on the support of the French delegation in his efforts to revitalize the General Assembly.

Change is evident in all areas this year. The need for change is now appreciated by everyone. The time has come for us all to commit ourselves and to underscore the importance we attach to the General Assembly. I have no doubt that the outside world is again taking note of what is happening in the Assembly.

Mr. Nambiar (India): My delegation is pleased to participate in this debate. We thank the Secretary-General for the various reports presented under the agenda items under consideration. We also express our appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, for her introductory statement yesterday.

The broader issues outlining the position of the non-aligned countries were expressed yesterday by Algeria, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by Morocco, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77. Their statements have my delegation's support.

We congratulate the President of the Assembly on his personal commitment to the process of revitalizing the General Assembly. In the few weeks during which he has presided over the General Assembly, he has demonstrated, by personal example, his determination to restore the prestige and authority of the General Assembly. We wish him every success in this endeavour and assure him of the fullest cooperation of the Indian delegation.

My delegation has maintained that in reform and revitalization we cannot expect to achieve remarkable results overnight. There are no magic solutions. Where we are called upon to deal with sensitive political questions and issues perceived by Member States as impinging on their core national interests, change will necessarily be slow and measured. We need to build on areas of agreement step by step, block by block. A useful beginning can be made by a quick review of the revitalization exercise undertaken so far and of the state of implementation or non-implementation of the resolutions already adopted.

India's broad political support for the reform process is premised on the objective of enhancing the

Organization's effectiveness to make it more responsive to the priorities of Member States, particularly for the developing countries, which constitute the vast majority of its membership.

Our support for the Secretary-General's initiative of setting up a high-level panel of eminent personalities to report on the threats and challenges faced by the United Nations and the changes necessary in its institutions and processes is also premised on the same objective. We hope the intergovernmental consideration of the report and its recommendations will provide us an opportunity to take a holistic view of the entire process, so that reforms in different parts of the United Nations system may move in the same direction and prove enduring in the long run.

The litmus test of any reform exercise would be whether it increases the Organization's ability to assist the developing countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other targets agreed upon at the major United Nations conferences and summits. The United Nations will be strengthened if and when it contributes effectively to the efforts of the developing countries in the implementation of those outcomes. This must also involve monitoring the extent to which developed countries are demonstrating shared responsibility by fulfilling their commitments and obligations, especially in reaching the agreed target of official development assistance through provision of additional financial resources, transfer of technologies, debt relief, market access and movement towards a greater voice for the developing countries in international, monetary and trade institutions. The other major test of the reform exercise will be greater effectiveness in the United Nations ability to deal with the "global bads", as it were: international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction — including the issue of nuclear disarmament — and transnational organized crime, including the trafficking in narcotic drugs, humans and arms.

In attempting to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, we must underline first of all the question of its core competence. The General Assembly is meant to be the highest body in the Organization to deliberate and review policy. It is not expected to function as an executive or judiciary body. As its presiding officer, the President must be able to enhance the effective performance of this function in the interest of the broad membership of the Assembly. In this era of cross-cutting concerns, we must guard against an overly zealous approach in which this body would proceed intrusively into areas which are essentially the core competence of other bodies in the United Nations system, even as we avoid a surrender of the General Assembly's remit to other bodies, including the Security Council or the Secretariat.

In practical terms, while the interactions between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have given rise to few difficulties, the relationship between the Assembly and the Security Council does occasionally give rise to anomalies in terms of issues taken up for consideration and their treatment. Also, the relative roles of the presiding officers of the two organs need clarification. We need to remember that the President of the General Assembly does not have the authority to represent the collective opinion of the General Assembly except when he is explicitly authorized to do so by the Assembly itself. The United Nations Charter does not confer any authority on the President in substantive matters.

While saying this, there is no denying the need for the Office of the President to be strengthened for the effective and orderly conduct of the Assembly's business. Without waiting for a lengthy and time-consuming exercise, we could move rapidly in several areas. For example, the Office of the President could easily be strengthened by the provision of a small number of additional posts. The implementation of this measure should not depend on the relative alacrity of the Secretariat's response to this as compared to other more attractive demands upon it.

Similarly, the Assembly needs to undertake a thorough review, not only of the agenda and programme of work for plenary meetings and of the Main Committees, but also of their methods of work, with a view to improving them and enhancing their effectiveness. The General Committee or an equivalent body could be entrusted with functions similar to those of the bureau of a Main Committee.

If there were consensus on reforming the agenda, Member States would be willing to explore ways in which discussions could be organized around particular themes and sub-themes in the work of the Main Committees. Similarly, Member States would be open to the idea of designating a theme for the general debate in plenary meeting, so long as they are in a position to address issues of concern to them.

There has been some talk of rationalizing the number, length and language of resolutions of the General Assembly. Since the General Assembly is the principal deliberative organ and fills a policy-making function, it is inevitable that some of its resolutions will contain declaratory language. However, when it comes to resolutions concerning the implementation of programmes of action or operational activities, it should be possible, in our view, to rationalize the language of resolutions and to simplify them so that the focus is on their operational content. This would also help in overseeing and reviewing implementation of the resolutions.

Another area that lends itself to early examination and agreement is that of the strict observance of the rules of procedure. The Main Committees seem to have developed work cultures of their own and often display scant respect for the established rules of procedure. This is not conscionable, and it is important that we look into this area more closely. At the same time, we need to be open to the idea of reviewing the rules of procedure and adapting them to modern times. To illustrate this point, the General Assembly would save valuable time and resources if we were to decide that delegations were free to circulate a longer version of their statements but would read only, say, an executive summary, so long as they were assured that the longer version would go into the record. However, so long as the provisional verbatim records of the General Assembly contain only the words that are actually spoken, that will not be possible.

There is often talk of the need to make General Assembly proceedings more interesting and attractive. This goal is pursued through the organizing of several high-profile parallel events, such as interactive dialogues, panel discussions and seminars. One of the stated objectives of this exercise is to enhance interaction with civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and the private sector. While there is nothing intrinsically objectionable in this idea — and in fact it might be useful — we wish to underscore the intergovernmental character of the Organization. Any effort to enhance interaction with civil society should be done in a manner that increases the quality of intergovernmental decision-making.

The Secretariat deserves our praise for recommending the elimination of several reports, meetings and other activities of marginal utility. Many of the reports for the fifty-eighth session were received well within the prescribed limit. We are grateful for this.

There are several other areas that need to be explored in terms of reducing the number of meetings and reports, reducing the number of resolutions and having sunset provisions for both new mandates and existing activities. Without doubt, these will require further discussion. We would just like to underline that reducing the volume of work and managing time and resources efficiently and effectively is a task not only for the Secretariat but also for Member States. A degree of self-discipline has to be exercised by Member States before they rush forward with new initiatives and resolutions every year.

The Secretary-General has outlined in document A/58/351 some of the measures being undertaken in his report on the status of implementation of actions in response to General Assembly resolution 57/300.

We trust that the consultations being held by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will encompass not only the members of the Commission on Human Rights but non-members of the Commission as well. We would emphasize the need for the process to be inclusive so that no impression is given of agreeing on matters in exclusive groupings. We hope the exercise will reduce the burden of reporting requirements, particularly on the developing countries. We would be open to considering guidelines for an expanded core document, so long as it is understood that such a document would reduce the reporting burden, address the issue of backlog, avoid the repetition of details and obviate the need for replicating the contents of the core document in individual reports to treaty bodies, or effectively expand the obligations of States parties to the core covenants. We call for more consultations with Member States on the matter.

The information on improving the system of special procedures provided in the report of the Secretary-General raises several points of concern. It is not clear to us whether the consultations initiated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on improving the special procedures mechanisms are inclusive and wide-ranging. We believe that the emphasis should be on greater coordination, avoiding duplication and overlapping, and checking the tendency of special procedures

mandate holders to exceed their mandates, which seems to be happening rather too frequently.

We do not favour the idea of joint initiatives, including joint urgent appeals, statements, press releases and communications, by special procedures mandate holders. In our view, the special procedures mandates are each distinct and different. We also do not see the need for a feasibility study for enhancing the "dissemination" of findings and recommendations of special procedures mandate holders. We believe such dissemination should be in the form of reports to the Commission on Human Rights. After all, the mandate holders are appointees of the Commission. Additionally, we do not believe that any useful purpose is served by interaction between special procedures mechanisms and the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council.

We call on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to fully implement the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services following their management review. In our view, those recommendations are comprehensive and focused, and merit full and effective implementation. Any expansion in the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights must be commensurate with its budgetary resources, and not based on extrabudgetary funding.

We note the ongoing work on the simplification and harmonization of programming tools and the strengthening of the resident coordinator system and we hope that those efforts will result in a reduction of transaction costs for developing countries and will enhance country ownership. It is important that specific proposals based on the policy guidelines set forth in General Assembly resolution 57/300 be submitted to the executive boards of the funds and programmes for approval.

The report of the Secretary-General sets out the recommendations of the Secretariat's joint Working Group on Transition Issues, which was charged with reviewing a range of United Nations responses in post-conflict situations. The Group recommended the facilitation of links among the political, peacekeeping and operational wings of the United Nations in order to address the variance in mandates for different United Nations offices at a given location. The underlying premise seems to be that a United Nations response cannot be effective if it is fragmented and that, therefore, those dealing with humanitarian assistance, those dealing with security, those dealing with human rights and those dealing with development should deliver an integrated response.

As we have reiterated on a number of occasions, there are several risks associated with such an approach. There is a predisposition in some quarters to see transition issues as opportunities to fundamentally transform the social mores, recast the economic priorities and influence the political dynamics of post-conflict societies. We must sound a note of caution here. If the United Nations collaborates in such efforts it could jeopardize its status as a trusted partner of developing countries. It is most important that the United Nations respect the differences in its roles in peacekeeping, in the protection and promotion of human rights, in fostering economic and social development, and in the coordination of humanitarian assistance. The delivery or coordination of assistance needs to be done in a manner that clearly conforms to the principles of development and humanitarian assistance that have been clearly established by the United Nations.

During its current session, the General Assembly will deliberate far-reaching reform of the planning and budgetary process. There is widespread recognition that these processes can be made more effective and efficient, with added value for both Member States and the Secretariat. While it is important to retain the intergovernmental nature of these processes, we need at the same time to ensure that intergovernmental review is more effective and relevant and that it provides clearer guidance to the Secretariat. This is a matter of crucial importance. This is a matter of urgency, but, given the long-term implications of such an exercise for the Organization, we must avoid hasty or half-cooked conclusions.

Those are some preliminary views of India on the cluster of issues under debate today. We took forward to working with other delegations in the upcoming discussions and consultations under these items.

Mr. Kim Sam-hoon (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to the strong commitment that President Hunte has demonstrated to the reform of our Organization. My delegation is encouraged by his dedication to this issue and hopes that it will bring about real reform this year. While the

Republic of Korea strongly supports the President's leadership in guiding overall United Nations reform, today I would like to focus on the reform of the General Assembly itself.

After 10 years of discussing the issue of General Assembly reform in this forum, my delegation cannot help but express its frustration with the slow progress that has been made thus far. Each year we have spoken on this issue, and yet we are unsure to what extent this perennial debate has enhanced the authority of the Assembly. We share the concern regarding the marginalization of the General Assembly. Before putting forward our suggestions on what should be done to resolve this problem, however, allow me to briefly discuss why we believe it has occurred.

First of all, because of the nature of the decisions made by the Security Council and the high visibility of its work, the centre of gravity of the United Nations has been progressively shifting towards the Council since the end of the cold war. In recent years, the Security Council has expanded the scope of its work beyond direct conflict management to include related matters such as the rule of law, justice and gender issues in the context of peacekeeping. It is notable as well that the Security Council virtually has the power to set the level of the peacekeeping budget, which is far greater than that of the United Nations regular budget. Not even the key financial contributors outside of the Security Council are consulted when new peacekeeping operations are created or existing ones expanded. Thus, some would argue that the power left to the General Assembly does not extend far beyond its rights with respect to the regular budget and elections to major United Nations organs, including the non-permanent members of the Security Council.

Second, the increase in the number of Member States has led to a greater divergence of interest and views, divisiveness and lack of unity in the General Assembly. This is a natural corollary of the growth in membership. Clearly, the lowest common denominator among the present 191 Member States is far lower than it was among the 51 Member States that existed at the time of the creation of the United Nations.

On issues of United Nations reform, all 191 Member States stand in agreement that the Organization must be revitalized and strengthened. Unfortunately, that consensus has been met with 191 different positions on how this reform should be carried out. It has become extremely difficult to formulate reform that will accommodate all the individual desires of all Member States. When Member States put their parochial interests above the collective common good of the Organization, the process of General Assembly reform cannot move forward. Meanwhile, there are too many sacred cows standing in the way of General Assembly reform. However, if we do not move forward with reform, the Organization's integrity, authority and relevance to the global order will suffer.

Thirdly, year in and year out too many General Assembly resolutions are adopted, too few of which are remembered, cared about or heeded. Many of them do not differ in substance from previous resolutions. As they are merely declaratory in nature and are not legally binding, they carry little weight. The number of agenda items never stops growing. As a result, we notice a tendency for the domestic issues of Member States to be brought before the General Assembly. Despite their dubious relevance, it is difficult for the other Member States not to support these resolutions, so long as they do no direct harm. However, the adoption of irrelevant resolutions does cumulative harm to the credibility of the General Assembly. The Assembly has expanded its scope of work to include even the commemoration of a national event. While these issues may be important for specific Member States, we must admit that they obscure the pressing global issues of concern to us all.

All these factors have combined to result in the weakening of the authority and relevance of the General Assembly. Although there are inherent constraints stemming from the Charter that reform cannot overcome, there is still much that we, as Member States, can do to revitalize and strengthen the role of the General Assembly.

First, we share the view that the Assembly should focus on issues in which the United Nations can make a difference in the world and which the Governments and peoples we serve will care about and take note of. More of the General Assembly's time and resources must be allocated to in-depth discussions on the most pressing global issues of public interest. In that regard, we support the idea of organizing the General Assembly agenda around a number of thematic issues. Moreover, certain agenda items should be considered biannually or triannually, while the obsolete ones should be deleted altogether. In that context, we

support the idea of avoiding repetition of the same resolutions. We must also exert greater effort to consolidate redundant issues and to re-evaluate issues that no longer serve their original purpose. In that regard, the Republic of Korea welcomes the initiative of the President on the regrouping or clustering of agenda items and looks forward to further progress to that end.

Secondly, with respect to the organization of meetings, we support the idea of scheduling meetings throughout the year so that we can make the best use of the resources available to Missions and to the Secretariat. We see no compelling reason why all Committee sessions should begin at the same time or why meetings should be concentrated in one season. If meetings were spread throughout the year, Member States could devote more attention to each agenda item.

Thirdly, the Republic of Korea agrees that there is a need to strengthen the Office of the President of the General Assembly in order to enhance the authority and the role of the Assembly. In that regard, we lend our support to the idea of using the General Committee as a bureau for the presidency. In the light of our own experience of holding the presidency of the General Assembly in 2001, we believe the Office of the President would benefit from an increased number of permanent staff members drawn from the Secretariat. In that connection, we underline the importance of the Secretary-General's support for the Office of the President.

Fourthly, we agree that there is a need to restructure and streamline the outdated roles of the organs so that the General Assembly can deal with salient global issues. In that context, the Republic of Korea pledges its unswerving support for United Nations reform aimed at promoting sound administration of the Organization's resources, transparency, a culture of accountability and improved programme performance to meet the challenges of our time.

Fifthly, regarding the modalities of reform, comprehensive holistic approaches have been in fashion for quite some time now at the United Nations. Nevertheless, there may be cases in which a piecemeal approach could prove more practical than a holistic approach. Thus, we see merit in employing an incremental approach in the context of attaining a holistic perspective.

Sixthly, we must make efforts to put the collective interests of the global community above our parochial interests. The United Nations was created to be greater than the sum of its parts. The lowest common denominator among 191 Member States with different philosophies and interests is far too low to effect real change. If we allow the reform process to move forward at the speed of those who are the least willing to move, little can be achieved. We should therefore not let the lowest common denominator dictate the speed and scope of reform. Real change within the United Nations will not happen without some degree of sacrifice from the general membership. When put in a broader context, small yet meaningful concessions from Member States will ultimately lead to tangible benefits for the entire international community.

Finally, my delegation wishes to stress that United Nations reform should be a continuous and action-oriented process. The United Nations, as a living organism, must constantly evolve and adapt in a timely manner to changing circumstances and to the needs of the times. When it fails to meet this challenge, it falls into benign irrelevance. Implementing reform is the only way to enable the Organization to overcome the new and emerging challenges that our dynamic world continues to pose.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): The Secretary-General has succinctly presented a most comprehensive report on strengthening the United Nations (A/58/351). It demonstrates his clear vision and consistent thoughts on bringing it to fruition. He is deserving of our most sincere thanks. But I would be remiss were I not to make very early reference to the commendable commitment and bold initiatives of the President of the General Assembly to that end. These have accorded a positive impetus to the revitalization process. His non-paper provides an excellent basis for our formal and informal deliberations.

I should also point out that we associate ourselves with the views of the representative of Algeria, Ambassador Abdallah Baali, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna of Morocco, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Their leadership role in this regard is praiseworthy.

The President took the Chair.

Bangladesh is a country which is in the midst of a tremendous societal transformation. Through a mix of appropriate macroeconomic policies, judicious use of external support, innovative home-grown ideas, commitment to democracy and pluralism and ardent dedication to gender justice and women's empowerment, peace and development have emerged as the twin supreme objectives of our nation. We see the United Nations as also embodying these aspirations and complementing our own efforts and those of others in comparable milieux.

We see the need for better equipping this institution, which represents the urges of humanity. We must, working together, enhance its capacity to realize its goals. Hence, we have consistently supported the reform efforts that we believe aim at doing just that. We believe that reform should be a continuing process. It should involve enhancing the efficiency of the Secretariat. It should also address itself to such intergovernmental organs as the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Changes sought must be aimed at the general good. They must not bend to the will of the more powerful. They must respond to complex global challenges posed in the areas of peace, security and development. Their purpose must be to contribute to reaffirming the United Nations as the central, universal, multilateral institution of the twenty-first century.

At the heart of the reform exercise must lie the desire to achieve all the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration as well as the implementation of all of the action plans emanating from the great conferences of the 1990s. While combating the "hard" terror brought on by irrational thought and action, the Organization should also be adequately empowered to root out the "soft" terrors of hunger, disease, privation and environmental degradation. While leading and inspiring the intellectual quest for the best means to advance human welfare, it must also function as the locator, collator and transmitter of indigenously evolved best practices. Reforms must not perpetuate current imbalances, nor must they respond only to the political, economic and military realities of a given point in time, for they are only transitory. Revitalization of the intergovernmental processes and institutions should not be seen in a mutually exclusive and compartmentalized manner, but in a mutually reinforcing and holistic way.

The Secretary-General's decision in this context to set up a panel of eminent personalities is most welcome. Those selected should be representative of the broadest spectrum of intellectual diversity as well as of equitable geographical distribution. It is important to ensure that they work free of external interference and in tandem with the intergovernmental process. They must also be able to address the problem without any ideological bias or preconceived a priori notions that would continue to be held even in the face of empirical evidence to the contrary.

We are heartened to note that the Secretary-General has accorded high priority to the Millennium Development Goals and to the medium-term plan in proposing a programme budget for 2004-2005. This is in line with what the General Assembly recommended last year. We are pleased with the cultural shift in presenting the budget in a results-based format. We commend the proposals for a shorter and more strategic medium-term plan and for refocusing the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination to monitor programme performance and evaluation. My delegation will examine these proposals with an open mind in the appropriate intergovernmental forum. We are confident that the Organization would benefit from a coherent approach to further rationalization of structures, optimal utilization of resources, elimination of duplication, reinforcement of coordination and introduction of benchmarks for monitoring and performance evaluation.

Economic and social development is the area to which my delegation attaches the highest importance. We support the enhancement of the effectiveness of the field presence of the United Nations in developing countries. The proposed modalities, such as strengthening the United Nations resident coordinator system, simplification and harmonization of development programmes, improving accountability, joint programming and evaluation reporting are noteworthy. The end result of these reform efforts must ensure better service delivery at the country level. National development needs and priorities should constitute the basis of these improved operational activities.

The establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa should provide increased support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). As the Chair of the Second Committee this year, I would recommend and hope that the proposed

measures also contribute to the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 in their development cooperation programmes. An overwhelming number of least developed countries are in Africa, a continent that confronts manifold structural impediments to development. Those barriers must be brought down. Africa has suffered much and long. The world now owes it to Africa to relieve its pain.

The new budget realignment to strengthen the capacity of the Economic and Social Council towards implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the Monterrey and Johannesburg decisions is a timely initiative. We look forward to the opportunity to assess the follow-up mechanisms to the Monterrey Consensus during the intergovernmental discussions in 2004. We strongly support the dialogue process established among the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Human rights is an area of high priority for Bangladesh. We believe development can only take place against a social matrix where values of human rights enjoy a premium. Many of the institutional reforms merit our commendation. I speak particularly, of those aimed at strengthening the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, supporting national capacity-building of strong human rights institutions, rationalizing reporting obligations to treaty bodies and improving the special procedures system. When the High Commissioner prepares his report next year, we would expect that Member States would be appropriately consulted.

We endorse the Secretary-General's approach towards evolving closer collaboration with civil society and the private sector. Bangladesh, as all are aware, has a vibrant civil society and a burgeoning private sector. Both are engaged in our country with the positive changes under way in our own society. While we look forward to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations Relations with Civil Society, we continue to advocate that capacity-building for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the Monterrey Consensus and for globalization should receive high priority in the role to be played by both the sectors. Many of the pragmatic recommendations that are emanating from the interactions between the Second Committee and civil society this year merit consideration in the work of the Panel. We are hopeful that the measures undertaken involving new techniques and technologies will improve the dissemination of public information, archives and documentation and also will make the voice of the United Nations heard better, and its relevance understood more.

As Chair of the Committee on Information this year, I look forward to working closely with the Department of Public Information and Member States on a systematic evaluation of the impact of all the good measures undertaken to strengthen a culture of communications in the Organization. Reallocation of resources saved from regional hubbing in Western Europe to strengthening United Nations information centres in developing countries and to promoting multilingualism would be of special interest to developing countries.

Before I conclude, let me say a word on the buzz-word in the corridors: revitalization of the General Assembly. We are confident that many of the creative and pragmatic ideas that emanated from the past few years of work and from our recent informals with you, Mr. President, will be sharpened and honed through further consultations. It is too early to comment on the specifics. However, the philosophy of the revitalization process should first be agreed upon. The two clusters — one on improving the working methods and the other on restoring and enhancing the authority and powers of the General Assembly, as envisaged in the Charter — should progress simultaneously.

Starting immediately with the small and achievable could be a practical strategy. Proper evaluation of progress would bring greater success. Demonstration of strong political will in placing collective interest before national interest, to prevent further marginalization and erosion of the General Assembly vis-à-vis the Security Council, should receive special focus. Strengthening the Office and role of the President of the General Assembly and its public outreach should be a valid and achievable starting point.

The Committees are key to the function of the General Assembly. Their revitalization must not be seen as separate from that of the Assembly. Reform and revitalization, then, must be a continuous, holistic and seamless process, aiming at expanding the wherewithal of the United Nations and all its organs to serve

humanity. Because this institution represents some of the noblest motives of humankind, it deserves the best that our creativity and wisdom can press into its service. The United Nations and humanity will find the results mutually rewarding.

Mr. Gatan (Philippines): The Philippines stands in solidarity with the views of the Group of 77 and of the Non- Aligned Movement on the cluster of four important agenda items relating to United Nations reform.

My delegation is pleased to note that the Office of the President of the General Assembly has demonstrated renewed interest in the subject of our current joint debate. We therefore commend you, Mr. President, for the number of initiatives you have already launched that are aimed at the efficient and effective management of the current and future sessions of the General Assembly.

Mr. President, in response to the call you made in your informal note for delegations to contribute constructively to this joint debate by proposing specific and concrete courses of action on both the form and substance of the work of the General Assembly, my delegation will refrain from dwelling on generalizations.

While our specific recommendations are directed towards the General Assembly in relation to agenda item 55 some may find application in the other clustered agenda items.

With regard to procedural matters, my delegation wishes, as of now, to submit only three proposals.

First, we propose that regional or group statements should take precedence over national statements in their inscription for the general debate. Delegations aligning themselves with the views presented by their respective regions or groups should try to refrain from delivering statements for the purpose of reiterating views already contained in their group statements. However, delegations which hold views not espoused in their regional or group statements may deliver brief national statements.

Regional or group statements should be comprehensive in written form for distribution, but their oral presentation has to be shortened, through either the presentation of an abstract or the highlighting of salient points only.

Secondly, we propose that not only should related agenda items be clustered, but also that the resolutions arising from them should likewise be clustered. Clustering, of course, generates a holistic consideration of interrelated issues, avoids duplication and thus conserves resources. More importantly, it allows more time for both interactive discussions and consideration of the President's conclusions on each cluster of agenda items — the subject of our next recommendation.

Thirdly, we propose that more time be given to an interactive discussion of issues considered during the general debate or of thematic issues. In this regard, it is further recommended that, in order to avoid an unwieldy exchange of views by all 191 States Members of the United Nations, the interactive discussion be carried out mainly by the spokesmen for groups, spiced with the participation of representatives of selected sectors of civil society. The President would then issue his own assessments or conclusions on the outcome of both the general debate and the interactive discussions, which may also serve as the basis for the formulation of resolutions or decisions of the General Assembly.

These three modest proposals for procedural change could go a long way towards injecting life into the work of the General Assembly, by giving more relevance to the outcome of discussions in the form of resolutions and decisions and by addressing the heart of universal or global concerns rather than marginal concerns.

With regard to substance, revitalization or reform may be elusive if we do not identify the perennial problems confronting the United Nations.

In terms of gravity, the foremost problem is the general awareness that United Nations resolutions, with the exception of those adopted by the Security Council, are not binding on Member States. The second problem is also the awareness that a great number of United Nations bodies are no longer representative of the general membership — a situation that can erode the interest of many Member States. The third is the apparent lack of strong coordination among the three important organs of the United Nations, namely the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

With regard to the first problem, my delegation proposes that an effective monitoring system be installed. For example, the monitoring of the

implementation of General Assembly resolutions should be delegated, whenever possible, to competent bodies such as the regional commissions. Monitoring should be a continuing process whose results should be reported back to the General Assembly.

On the second problem, my delegation proposes a review by, perhaps, a working group on the membership of important United Nations bodies, starting with the Economic and Social Council, with a view to rationalizing membership in relation to the number of countries represented or to group representation.

On the third problem, we propose intersessional bilateral consultative meetings between the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council to coordinate their respective work and to assess the outcome of coordination. There should likewise be consultative meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter, particularly Articles 10, 11 and 24.

For more than 10 years, the General Assembly has been seized with the issue of revitalization and reform. Yet the measures adopted so far have been modest in contrast to the mounting problems of both macro and micromanagement. My delegation is confident that under your stewardship of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, we will be able to register significant improvements in both the form and the substance of our multilateral work.

My delegation proposes that the President once again convene an informal working group to look into all the submissions presented during this joint debate to coming up with an agreed improved course of action to take effect at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Libyan delegation expresses its satisfaction at the importance attached to the reform of the United Nations and the rationalization of the role of the General Assembly. My delegation expresses its appreciation to you, Sir, for your initiative to study methods of improving the work of the General Assembly and your determination to pursue this process within the framework of strengthening the Assembly's role so that it can function more effectively.

We pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the reforms and for the initiative that he presented at the start of this session, namely the creation of a panel of eminent persons to study the reform of the United Nations. The delegation of Algeria spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the delegation of Morocco spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We support their statements and wish to add a few comments.

In evaluating the progress made to date on the rationalization of the General Assembly, Libya considers it a step in the right direction that the President and Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly and the Chairmen of the Main Committees are elected three months before the General Assembly session begins. However, we believe that this is merely a procedural change, not a goal. We need measures focussing on substantial issues in order to give real meaning to the revitalization of the Assembly. We must reactivate the Assembly's role so that it can be the responsible body to which the subsidiary organs, including the Security Council, must be accountable. It must carry out its work as mandated by the Charter and be faithful to its principles, working in cooperation with other bodies for the maintenance of international peace and security. Moreover we think that the General Assembly should meet whenever a crisis that threatens international peace arises, study the crisis and then transmit its recommendations for study by the Security Council.

My delegation understands the importance of encouraging Member States, as well as their national institutions and civil societies, to publish widely the decisions and recommendations of the General Assembly. That would solve the dilemma that concerns us: the inability to implement the resolutions adopted by this body. We think the most effective measure in this respect would be to create a mechanism of the General Assembly that would follow up on implementation of its decisions and recommendations and highlight successes and failures and the means of remedying them. Otherwise, we fear that some will have the impression that this body is simply a place where people and countries shed tears and make complaints over resolutions that remain dead letters — as the Secretary-General has said, resolutions of no importance outside the Assembly Hall.

Member States are keen to be represented at the highest level during the general debate of each session

of the General Assembly. The presence of heads of State and Government during this and past sessions demonstrates the great importance that Member States attach to the Assembly as the principal forum for deliberation and policy-making. However, we feel that this interest starts to wane after the first two weeks of the session. Certain items on the agenda have been addressed by speakers who find themselves practically alone in the Hall — a small handful of delegates attend simply as a matter of courtesy. My delegation thinks that we should reflect on how to make agenda items more attractive, for example by encouraging interactive debate rather than listening to previously prepared statements. We should study the proposal on issues of special concern and ensure balance in the items of the agenda.

The delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya expresses its satisfaction at the practice of grouping certain agenda items for discussion every two years. We were among the first to act on that measure. We think that the item under consideration is a case in point. We are strongly opposed to what some are doing, namely deleting certain items on the agenda that have not been debated by the General Assembly for years. We think that those resolutions and decisions should continue to be debated and that debate on those items or the lack thereof should not be made the sole criterion for such a decision. The Libyan delegation supports a reconsideration of the annual decisions of the General Assembly. We believe that items of a similar nature should be grouped together. We support the proposal aimed at reducing the number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly.

With respect to the proposal to consider extending the schedule of the General Assembly session over the entire calendar year instead of limiting it to the period from September to December, we believe it is an original idea. The Fifth Committee provides an example; it convenes several time throughout the year in order to complete its consideration of the items that could not be heard during its principal segment. The Libyan delegation considers this proposal to be positive, particularly for small delegations that could then participate more intensively. We think that this proposal deserves serious study.

In that context, we ask the following questions. First, will the meetings of the Main Committees take place several times a year? If so, when will Member States be informed as to which items are to be studied in each segment, in particular those items that require experts to come from participating capitals. Secondly, if the General Assembly and the Committees hold meetings on a continual basis, what will be the length of each committee meeting, and who decides that? Thirdly, will the meetings of the Main Committees take place continually throughout the year, and will there be simultaneous meetings of more than one Main Committee?

We have listened with interest to the debate and proposals for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. The Libyan delegation thinks that these ideas require thorough study and examination. That should be done in consultation with the General Assembly as a whole, as was the case on 17 October. In that context, we support the proposal to designate coordinators for consultations and for the study of the proposals and for preparing specific proposals to be considered by the General Assembly.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia welcomes the report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" on the implementation of actions (A/57/786). We took note of the special attention paid by the Secretary-General to the issue of United Nations reform and improvement of its executive mechanisms. We wish to note that the Secretary-General clearly understands the substance and the objectives of reforms and that they are implemented with high administrative efficiency.

Russia supports the concept of strengthening coordination within the United Nations system and the interfunctioning of its key elements. We believe that efforts in this direction should be focused on formulating a joint response by the international community to new challenges and threats and on joint efforts of Member States to strengthen international security in all its dimensions.

As far as the report is concerned, we regard it as a well-balanced document that objectively reflects the active process of transformation in various areas of United Nations activity, in accordance with the well known resolution on reform, General Assembly resolution 57/300. We agree with the idea that the United Nations regular budget for 2004-2005 should become the main practical instrument to bring United Nations activities in line with priority objectives. In

other words, the main financial document of the United Nations should effectively contribute to the reform process.

In the field of human rights, the main goal of transformation is to strengthen national systems of human rights protection and to promote closer interaction between Governments and United Nations bodies regarding implementation of core human rights treaties. Attention has been paid to activities to improve the system of special procedures and to enhance the degree of respective responsibilities. We recognize the fact that work in that direction has been conducted generally in a well-balanced and conscious manner, without attempting to sacrifice quantity at the expense of quality.

The section of the report on United Nations activities in the field of public information is focused on the main aspects of rationalizing United Nations information activities. Analysis of that section of the report shows that the transformations that had been initiated are essentially in line with the ideas and the comments considered during the most recent session of the Committee on Information, as well as with the recommendations outlined in the report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system: an agenda for further change" (*A/57/387*).

We continue to support the restructuring process of the Department of Public Information. We hope that the new operating model of the Department, launched in November 2002, will contribute to efficient and consistent implementation of earlier established strategic goals for reforming and improving the United Nations information branch. We consider as important the task set out by the Secretary-General to develop a system for assessing the performance of the new operating model of the Department. We await the results of the first annual programme impact review, which, as planned, is to be submitted for consideration by the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Information in 2004.

We regard as appropriate the provision of the report regarding the consideration by the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly of the proposal to transfer the Cartographic Section from the Department of Public Information to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as had been repeatedly discussed and provisionally approved at Committee on Information meetings.

We support the process of rationalizing the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 57/300. We believe it is important that the funds that are thus saved should be used to address important and priority tasks of the Department of Public Information.

We also continue to follow closely the efforts of the Department to improve and optimize United Nations libraries in the light of the specifics of their work at different duty stations. We support the establishment, in March 2003, of the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, which is called upon to draft concrete recommendations with a view to increasing efficiency and accessibility of the United Nations library system. We await a detailed report on the implementation process of specific initiatives that are being worked out by the members of the Steering Committee during their quarterly meetings.

Regarding section III, on streamlining publications and reports, we appreciate the real improvements made in this area. Given the specifics of the Secretary-General's report on oceans and the law of the sea, which actually serves as a unique reference for all issues of cooperation among States in maritime affairs over the past year, we propose to maintain the practice of publishing this report above and beyond the limits established by the Secretariat for publishing this type of document.

As for strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations presence in developing countries, it should be kept in mind that measures of United Nations operational agencies in this area, as reflected in the relevant chapter of the report, are regularly examined at the sessions of the Economic and Social Council and of the executive boards of relevant programmes and funds, such as the United Nations Development Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund, and approved by their resolutions and decisions. Agreed approaches of the Member States to these issues have been reflected particularly in the resolutions of the operative segment of the 2003 Economic and Social Council regular session.

It seems appropriate to continue the discussion on these topics within that type of format. Support should

be given to measures to simplify and agree on programming instruments aimed, inter alia, at reducing transaction costs for recipient countries, particularly the United Nations Development Assistance Framework results matrix, and streamlining tools for evaluation and reporting.

With respect to strengthening the resident coordinator system, greater participation of United Nations specialized and technical agencies in the functioning of this system is generally regarded by Member States as a step towards improvement. However, the task of balanced representation of United Nations organizations among the posts of resident coordinators should not become a goal in itself: the candidature of resident coordinators, beyond the purely professional requirements, in terms of involvement in a given United Nations system agency should be consistent with priority areas of cooperation with a given country and the United Nations.

With regard to strengthening the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, we support the establishment of the Financing for Development Office and the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination. With regard to the proposal to divide the main divisions of the Department into two clusters, each reporting to an Assistant Secretary-General, one focusing primarily on data analysis and information and the other on support for intergovernmental processes in the various policy areas, as well as in the context of meeting-related operational responsibilities, it is important to decide how the coordination and interaction of these clusters can be implemented. The intended strengthening of the Department could also be used to strengthen the potential of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

We welcome the establishment of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, and we look forward to the efficient work of that new entity. In the area of promoting partnerships, we support efforts aimed at expanding United Nations cooperation with the private sector, and particularly the establishment of a partnership office, which will comprise the Global Compact Office and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships. We welcome cooperation between the office and the network of private-sector focal points throughout the United Nations system. We support the active promotion of partnership initiatives at the national, regional and international levels.

Nevertheless, we believe it essential that our main focus of attention be placed on practical implementation of the outcomes of the recent United Nations summits and conferences. The attainment of those goals is the principal objective for all partners — Governments, international organizations, business and non-governmental organizations — and it is also their common responsibility, especially given their extensive involvement in preparing for and holding such forums and in drafting their decisions. In that regard, we believe it important that non-governmental organizations have an opportunity to share their experience in participating in implementing the outcomes of those conferences and to properly evaluate their respective practical measures in that area. The United Nations Secretariat should envisage the most effective format possible for such a dialogue among civil society representatives.

With respect to United Nations administrative and budgetary reform, its focus will depend on Member States' decisions on a number of additional reports by the Secretariat regarding changes in the United Nations planning and budgeting process. For the time being, we should like to assess positively the improvements already made in the structure and format of the regular draft budgets and the draft budgets for peacekeeping operations. Any changes in United Nations personnel policy — inter alia, enhanced conditions of service or revised mechanisms to promote mobility — should, in our view, be in line with relevant General Assembly decisions in that area.

In conclusion, I should like to note that the Russian Federation is prepared to participate constructively and actively in consultations on this agenda item in order to reach agreed and balanced decisions.

Mr. Apata (Nigeria): I wish to express the delegation of Nigeria's appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his initiatives and efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations. His efforts are consistent with the decisions and declarations of the Millennium Summit, at which our leaders pledged to make the United Nations a more effective institution for the promotion of world peace and sustainable development. We should also like to pay special tribute to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, for her outstanding work on that issue during the fifty-seventh session.

Undoubtedly, significant progress has been made in the area of peace and security in the past five years. As a result, the United Nations is seen globally as an Organization dedicated to the maintenance of international peace and security, and Nigeria welcomes that. The reorganization and enhancement of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, following the consideration and review of the Brahimi report, has resulted in improvement in the capacity of the United Nations to deploy and manage complex peacekeeping and peace-building operations. In that regard, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, most recently, Liberia — where the United Nations effectively took over peacekeeping operations from the Economic Community of West African States — are success stories. We welcome and support the introduction of the rule of law, gender mainstreaming and a multidimensional approach to peacekeeping operations.

Given that the Millennium Development Goals emphasized the imperativeness of sustainable development through poverty eradication, the United Nations should rededicate its energies to addressing the problems of hunger, malnutrition and diseases, especially the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis. Nigeria would like the United Nations and the rest of the international community to show the same commitment that they have demonstrated in the area of peace and security to promoting social and economic development. The targets we set for ourselves in the Millennium Declaration are very far-reaching. The year 2015 may seem far away. The reality is that, if we are to achieve the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, we need to radically shift our focus and to commence the rapid implementation of the Goals and the outcomes of the Johannesburg and Monterrey summits. That is the great challenge facing the Organization today.

Since we cannot afford a United Nations with a majority of Members that are incapacitated by the staggering external debt crisis, the United Nations should explore avenues of resolving the crippling debt problem. We observe that, in 2002, the total debt of developing countries and countries with economies in transition increased by approximately $52 billion, while official capital flows to developing countries have witnessed a steady decline. It is estimated that in 2003, developing countries will spend $350 billion on their external debt burdens. In that regard, we cannot but agree with the Secretary-General's view that "reaching the Millennium Development Goals requires an increase in external financing from official sources, in addition to debt relief" (A/58/290, para. 41). We therefore urge that the problem of external debt be addressed with creativity, innovation, greater flexibility and a debt rescue strategy.

Another area where the United Nations can play — and indeed is already playing — a commendable role is in building strong partnerships. In that regard, we endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities that would, among other things, examine the current challenges to peace and security, consider the contributions that collective action can make in addressing those challenges and review the functioning of the major organs of the United Nations and the relationships between them. We would consider the establishment of the panel to be yet another milestone in United Nations efforts to reach out to the wider society in search of solutions to strengthen the Organization.

Nigeria welcomes the partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, and non-State actors, such as civil society organizations, interest groups, universities and individuals. In that regard, we note with satisfaction that individual businesses as well as business organizations were given the opportunity to be formally accredited to the International Conference on Financing for Development and its Preparatory Committee, and that business representatives made policy proposals for discussion with Governments and international organizations. Exchanging policies and strategies with the organized private sector is appropriate, correct and consistent with the objectives of the Millennium Declaration. It should therefore be continued. Given these positive developments, Nigeria believes that the United Nations has positioned itself to monitor and follow up these partnerships.

We note that the 2004-2005 budget proposals reflected a number of measures aimed at strengthening the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, especially its management capacity. We welcome the proposals in the budget outlining the realignment of the entire Department in accordance with the new mandates arising from the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Action, taking into account the decision of the General

Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of other major United Nations conferences and summits.

Although the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa was established last May, within the past six months it has made significant contributions to the promotion of the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We commend the quality of reports that the Office presented during the General Assembly debate on NEPAD, as well as its efforts at galvanizing the international community's support for NEPAD. We now need to provide adequate resources to enable the Office to meet the obligations of its mandate.

We commend you, Mr. President, for having initiated, very early in this session, the process of revitalizing the General Assembly. Nigeria commends the proposals in the non-paper that you submitted for the informal consultations of the General Assembly. We associate ourselves with the views expressed by the delegation of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

It is important to acknowledge that, since the fifty-fifth session, we have taken important steps — albeit modest ones — in our collective efforts to revamp the General Assembly. In this connection, Nigeria wishes to pay special tribute to the Presidents of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth, fifty-sixth and fifty-seventh sessions and their facilitators for having deployed their best efforts on this very vital issue. Undoubtedly their contributions and efforts contributed immensely to the success achieved so far, particularly in the clustering of a number of agenda items and the election ahead of time of the president of the General Assembly and the principal officers of the Committees. We now need to focus on how to strengthen the Office of the President of the General Assembly and on the reform of our agenda.

Nigeria has always maintained that any Member State should be able to aspire to the highest office of this important organ. Yet it has been consistently manifest in the past 10 years that the holders of that office have had to deploy enormous resources from their capitals to assist them in discharging their responsibilities. The implication is that States that are not endowed with such resources will hesitate in offering the services of their nationals for this important assignment. In fact, it would be difficult for many Member States, particularly the least developed countries — many of which are from our continent — to offer a services of their nationals for this important office because of that constraint. Are we not by implication disenfranchising them? Are we also not preventing the General Assembly from being a bastion of democratic ideals in which both the powerful and the not-so-powerful have equal rights and aspirations?

It is therefore imperative for us to move rapidly at the current session towards adopting measures that would strengthen the Office of the President, such as by creating a number of staff positions for that Office. Such a decision will effectively remove the need for presidents of the General Assembly to bring senior officials from their capitals to assist them in the discharge of their important responsibilities. That would also enhance the institutional memory of the office.

With respect to the issue of the agenda of the General Assembly, Nigeria urges the president to hold regular and intensive discussions with the chairpersons of regional groups, as well as with Member States concerned, on how to resolve the problem. We should consider, for example, the establishment of special list of reserve items, without prejudice to the ability of Member States to bring up issues whenever they so desire. Another important way of strengthening the General Assembly would be to ensure that its decisions are implemented. Nigeria would like the Secretariat to be mandated to provide Member States, every four years, with a list of the Assembly's decisions and resolutions, and the level of their implementation. Such a measure would assist us in evaluating our performance — or, indeed, our non-performance.

On the reform and restructuring of the work of the Main Committees, Nigeria holds the view that no Committee should be singled out for reform, since the tasks of all the Committees are linked and interwoven. Consequently, the reform of the Main Committees should be carried out in a holistic manner.

In conclusion, Nigeria believes that the strengthening of the United Nations and the revitalization of the General Assembly should be seen as a work in progress. Nigeria reaffirms its support for efforts aimed at strengthening the entire United Nations, and assures the Secretary-General of our continued active participation in the process.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation joins others in acknowledging your ongoing spirited initiative, Mr. President, to advance the debate on revitalizing the General Assembly in the context of the overarching agenda of the reform of the United Nations. It is a timely and commendable initiative. My delegation fully associates itself with the statements on this subject made by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We attach great importance to the statements made by regional groups on this important subject of the reform of the United Nations and its organs. The views expressed in those statements are a synthesis of the views of the various groups of States and reflect the ongoing thinking and perceptions of the Member States in various regions of the world with regard to this Organization. This is a democratic method of representing States and providing inputs for the reform process and of collating and accommodating the diverse views of the shared vision of the 191 Members of this world body.

My country fully supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations and is ready to provide maximum support for his endeavours. The debate on reforms has been going on for nearly a decade. It has gathered greater momentum in the past five years, generating a wealth of implementable ideas. In the meantime, new developments and trends have emerged in the international community as challenges to the United Nations that require an urgent response on the part of the Organization, which is the repository of the collective will of its entire membership.

The pace of the emerging global developments and challenges is overtaking the pace of the reform of the Organization and the capacity of this institution to adequately cope with the changes. Indeed, the reforms are long overdue and need to be effected sooner, rather than later, so as to enable existing institutions to remain relevant and focused on the challenges.

Globalization, new conventional and unconventional methods of warfare, global epidemics, the realization of the Millennium Declaration and other goals that we have set ourselves, are but a few of the array of challenges which demand prompt responses by the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations.

My delegation welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a Panel Of Eminent Persons to make recommendations on the reform of the United Nations. We trust this will bring added value to existing proposals, some of which are already amenable to implementation and only require the galvanized political will of the Member States.

A key shortcoming in the revitalization of the General Assembly is the delay in implementation or non-implementation of its resolutions on revitalization that have already been adopted, as well as of other resolutions which the Assembly, as the policy-making body of the United Nations, has adopted in the course of its work. There is an urgent need holistically to link policy-making, decision-making and implementation, as stipulated in Chapter IV of the United Nations Charter on the mandate of the General Assembly. Equally important is the follow-up to conferences and meetings arising from resolutions of this Assembly, which ought to be centred on performance and results rather than on processes and proceedings on their reports. Such an approach would provide benchmarks for evaluating progress and expediting the effective implementation of General Assembly resolutions.

In this regard, we welcome your proposals, Sir, on enhancing the role of the President and the presidency, the creation of the Bureau of the Assembly and giving the General Committee that role. This will permit close follow-up to and evaluation of the implementation process, and strengthening and streamlining the working relationship between the Presidency and the Secretariat, as well as that between the General Assembly and other organs of the Organization, including the Security Council, as stipulated in the Charter.

It is important, therefore, that the revitalization of the General Assembly be accomplished simultaneously with reforms in the other organs of the Organization in order to coordinate and synchronize the overall reform process in a transparent manner. Of particular significance in enhancing the authority of the General Assembly is making better use of its decision-making power in budgetary matters, as elaborated in the statement of the Group of 77 and China. It is also equally essential that the relationship between and responsibilities of the other General Assembly Committees be reviewed to enable the Assembly to exercise its central role vis-à-vis the Committees in

order to streamline the coverage of related issues and agenda items, as deemed appropriate by the presidency.

Considerable effort has been made to rationalize the working methods of the General Assembly, such as documentation procedures, reorganization of agenda items, methodology of drafting and presenting resolutions, and time allocation for debates. However, rationalization should be seen as a prerequisite to revitalization of the Assembly, as well as an outcome of improvements in the methods of work arising from the revitalization of the General Assembly. As the revitalization task is accomplished, the needed working methods would be addressed accordingly. Reform has to be a continuous process. It may be necessary as an outcome of this exercise to establish a timetable for initiating reform and revitalization measures that are evidently feasible and could proceed after receiving the endorsement of Member States.

Finally, the General Assembly has the whole populace of this globe as its constituency. With rapid advances in information technology, more and more sectors of civil society in our respective countries are following what is being done at the United Nations to address issues of common concern and interest to them, such as peace, security and their overall socio-economic well-being as citizens of this world. The reforms of the United Nations should, in collaboration with States, also include the strengthening of outreach activities to the peoples of the world, not only to enhance its visibility, accountability and trust by the nations of the world at large, but above all to recognize the ownership of this multilateral body by we, the peoples of the United Nations.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, please allow me to express my appreciation to you, Sir, for holding this important meeting and for the informal note you issued not long ago. The note provides a good basis for our discussions. I also wish to thank Deputy Secretary-General Fréchette for her statement.

The Chinese delegation believes that the United Nations should keep pace with the times and reinforce the reform process so as to meet the needs of the new circumstances. We are pleased to note that the General Assembly has made reform one of its top priorities at this session and we highly commend the active role of President Hunte in that regard. We also commend the initiative of Secretary-General to establish the Panel Of Eminent Persons on United Nations Relations with Civil Society. I wish to emphasize the following points on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

According to the Charter, the General Assembly is one of the most important organs of the Organization. It is the main venue at which all Member States may review and make decisions on such major issues as the maintenance of peace and security, the promotion of economic and social development and the strengthening of the international legal system. Its importance, broad representation and authority are indisputable.

Currently, the United Nations is facing unprecedented challenges in all fields. Terrorist threats are increasing unabated, regional conflicts are incessant, development issues remain acute and environmental protection still constitutes an arduous task. Furthermore, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the spread of communicable diseases and other new problems also call for appropriate solutions. The international community ardently hopes to see a stronger role of the United Nations so that it can serve as an effective mechanism in coordinating national efforts and can better respond to new threats and challenges.

A revitalized General Assembly will help strengthen the determination of Member States to pursue multilateralism, which will in turn have a major and far-reaching impact on rebuilding the authority and credibility of the United Nations system as a whole. Discussions on this subject have been going on for 11 years, since the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and progress has been made in some areas. However, frankly speaking, it still falls far short of the aspirations and expectations of the vast number of Member States. The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly bears on the interests of each and every Member State and on the future role of the United Nations. All of us must therefore have a strong sense of urgency.

The Chinese delegation fully endorses President Hunte's proposal to focus our discussions on two broad areas: enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly and improving its working methods. We look forward to early substantial progress that will instil greater vitality in the General Assembly and enable it to play a more effective role in maintaining peace and

promoting development. To that end, it is necessary fully to solicit the views of the Member States, especially the developing countries, and to start with easier issues in order to reach consensus.

With respect to strengthening the authority and role of the General Assembly, the Chinese delegation holds that the relationship between the General Assembly and other principal organs, including the Security Council, is not one of competition and exclusion. Instead, it is one of cooperation and complementarity. We are in favour of enhancing the interaction between the General Assembly and other principal organs such as the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

We embrace the idea of choosing a theme for each session of the General Assembly, on the basis of prior consultations among Member States, in order to make the general debate more focused. We are also in favour of launching a regular review of resolutions adopted and decisions made previously by the Assembly and of making necessary adjustments or deletions according to the outcome of the review.

We support making earnest efforts to strengthen the function of the Office of the President of the General Assembly in terms of both human and financial resources. We believe it is necessary to establish a contact mechanism between the previous, the incumbent and the succeeding presidents to ensure continuity and consistency in the work of the Assembly. We also hope that each newly elected president will draw up recommendations for work priorities as early as possible.

We deem it a positive suggestion that the Department of Public Information be authorized to prepare an annual plan of action for each session of the General Assembly. This should be approved and implemented at an early date, while, at the same time, avoiding redundancy and waste.

On improving the working methods of the General Assembly, Mr. President, you yourself, Secretary-General Kofi Annan and representatives of Member States have put forward many constructive suggestions. What we need now is speedy action.

First, it is necessary to rationalize and streamline the agenda of the General Assembly. Some items can be considered in clusters or biannually. It is also necessary to schedule the consideration of items in a more balanced manner; some items can be discussed after the September to December period.

Secondly, practical solutions need to be found with respect to the overflow of documents. On the one hand, Member States should try not to request reports from the Secretary-General on every single issue, and on the other, the Secretariat should improve the quality of the reports with more focused analyses and more operable recommendations. The length of reports should also be drastically reduced and we request the Secretariat to work out some effective measures in that regard.

Thirdly, it is necessary to cluster the agenda items of the General Assembly and the Main Committees to define their focus and avoid repeated deliberation. There should be strengthened coordination in this regard among the president of the General Assembly, the chairs of the Main Committees and the representatives of the Secretary-General.

Fourthly, it is necessary to reinforce the function and mandate of the General Committee for a more effective operation of the General Assembly and the Main Committees. We recommend that the General Committee, taking into account the present situation and the wishes of most Member States, adopt specific measures to improve the procedures for submitting and finalizing agenda items, thus saving time and energy for both the Member States and the Secretariat.

Finally, it is necessary to proceed from actual needs and take the initiative to enhance exchanges with other institutions and civil society in various related areas so as to make good use of their resources.

All Member States have great expectations regarding the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, and President Hunte has demonstrated outstanding talents of leadership. We are now at a most opportune moment for making tangible progress. An ancient Chinese saying declares that "The sails on the boat are all set, all we need now is the right wind." We are confident that as long as the Member States can be guided by common interests, show strong political will and promote the reform process in a spirit of innovation and inclusion, the revitalization effort will soon bear fruit. Let us all join hands to this end.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): Today we consider a cluster of items dealing with the restructuring and reform of the United Nations and the

revitalization of the General Assembly, which are highly important in the context of the current global environment.

In his reports, the Secretary-General has consistently pointed out that, in order to make our Organization more effective, efficient and dedicated to working for the benefit of the peoples of the world, we must be well prepared to change with the times, constantly adjusting to new realities and new challenges. The need for a strong multilateral institution has never been more acutely felt than in this year that has been characterized by continuing globalization.

We fully support the initiative of the Secretary-General concerning the establishment of a high-level panel to review the functioning of the United Nations system. As other delegations, we do believe, however, that the work of revitalization and reform should be continued next year without waiting for the panel's recommendations.

It is imperative to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the social and economic areas. In our view, reforms should help the United Nations energize international cooperation in the follow-up to the outcomes of the major international conferences and summits held under its auspices. We believe that an implementation review process should be used to reaffirm the goals and objectives agreed upon at conferences and summits and to identify obstacles and constraints as well as actions and initiatives to overcome these.

In this context, a major event in 2005 to review the progress achieved in implementing all the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration, as referred to by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/270 B, would hopefully contribute to that process.

In our view, coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations should be reinvigorated. In this context, Kazakhstan proposes establishing a permanent council of regional organizations under the authority of United Nations Secretary-General. We believe that in order to make our Organization stronger, we should tune up the intergovernmental machinery and improve the methods of work of, most notably, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. The revitalization of the agendas of these bodies, coupled with better working methods, would be an essential step towards turning the United Nations as a whole into a more efficient tool.

My delegation welcomes the initiative of the President of the General Assembly concerning the provision of a framework for the revitalization of the Assembly, which is the heart of the reform of our Organization. We must direct our attention to the consideration of measures to improve its working methods because we do need an Assembly that is a more efficient, more focused and more relevant body. The first step in this direction, according to our vision, is the strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, whose role in the whole exercise is indispensable. We believe that these specific steps would enhance the role of the Assembly and increase its efficiency and effectiveness.

My delegation recognizes that some progress has been made in streamlining the agenda of the Assembly. We need to optimize it still further because some items do not require consideration on an annual basis. Also, items on which discussion has been deferred for a number of years must be deleted altogether.

We believe that debates in the plenary and in the Main Committees could be more interactive if they focused on a limited number of key issues of common interest. We must also make practical improvements with respect to resolutions. They could be shorter, more focused and meaningful. Their implementation must be monitored in an effective way.

The open-ended informal consultations on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, convened by the President, have provided an opportunity to have an extensive exchange of views and have laid the ground for the present plenary meeting. We agree with the proposal to hold informal consultations, breaking down the issues into two broad subjects — enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly and improving its working methods.

As for the Security Council, it is obvious that the conditions that determined its composition and procedures have changed dramatically. Kazakhstan supports the proposal to convene a high-level meeting regarding the reform of that principal body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Another main United Nations body, the Economic and Social Council, must be more effective in the area of coordinating the activities of the United Nations

specialized agencies. In this regard, it is essential to devise clear guidelines with respect to the reform of the Economic and Social Council.

The Economic and Social Council could also be more effective in strengthening cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions in order to give them an additional impetus. It is time to combine, in practical terms, the efforts of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other leading economic and financial organizations to address poverty and social development.

Introducing a second set of United Nations reforms at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General proposed a comprehensive review of our programme of work, devoting our attention to the priorities established in the Millennium Declaration. We commend the Secretary-General for paying close attention to resource allocation. His proposal to cut the medium-term plan to two years would enable review bodies to take a more strategic approach to the work of the Organization and its resources. We approach the budgetary reform process in a positive manner and my delegation is ready to work with other delegations in order to make sure that far-reaching decisions are adopted at the current session.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's commitment to the United Nations reform process with a view to ensuring a safer and just world order. We fully share the Secretary-General's sense of urgency when it comes to structural changes within the United Nations. The United Nations can be strong if all Member States give their full support to the Secretary-General's reform initiatives. Kazakhstan stands ready to contribute to making the Organization more responsive to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): Let me begin by offering you my congratulations on organizing this joint debate. It is clear from the speeches we have heard so far that there is new energy regarding this issue and I think you, Sir, have done more than anyone else to revive a subject that has been drifting around the United Nations.

I want to mention in particular the speeches by Algeria and Morocco on behalf of Non-Aligned Movement and Group of 77. I thought there were also significant statements made by the delegations of Japan and the United States. I want to thank my colleague from Japan for referring to the four criteria we had mentioned; we appreciate that.

But I want to mention in particular the statement made by the United States delegation in which it spoke of seven principles that should guide our reform work. And indeed, if I may say something at the very outset to illustrate the problem that we face, we have a new statement and new principles. It is in the nature of this room that we do not talk to each other and do not refer to each other's statements and that indicates the problem that we have. But the reason why we wanted to highlight the principles mentioned by the United States — responsibility, accountability, effectiveness, stewardship of financial resources, modernization, credibility and freedom — is because we believe that these are useful principles to look at. We certainly support the principle of accountability, and if we can, indeed, in some way embed the principle of accountability into every dimension of the United Nations work, whether it is in the Secretariat, the Security Council, or the General Assembly, then I say half the problem is solved.

What I propose to do today, in the hope of making a helpful contribution, is to make four points. The first point poses the question of whether the non-revitalized General Assembly — I am not quite sure how you describe a non-revitalized General Assembly, perhaps a stagnant or a floundering General Assembly — is the problem, or a symptom of a larger problem? The second point asks: what are the real root causes, to use a favourite United Nations word, of a floundering General Assembly? The third point asks: what are the real solutions for revitalizing the General Assembly? And finally, I will try to mention a few points of detail that have come up in the debate so far.

The first point: is it the General Assembly that is lost or the United Nations as an Organization that is lost? I would like to suggest that we should consider the possibility that perhaps it is the Organization as a whole, and not just the General Assembly, that is lost.

The best way of illustrating this situation is to ask ourselves what a visitor from another planet, from, say, Mars, would see if he visited planet Earth for the first time. If he went around the globe, he would see a very dynamic globe where change is taking place every day, even as we speak. We live indeed in one of the most interesting moments in history. But if this visitor from

Mars asked to be taken to the centre of global issues and was brought into this room and was told "this is the centre of global issues," he would be quite puzzled with, on the one hand, the dynamism of the world out there and, on the other, the sleepiness of this room in here. This in some ways indicates that the Organization as whole may be part of the problem.

Of course, to be fair, some parts of this Organization are working, such as the peacekeeping operations or the norm creation exercises. There is much valuable work being done by the Organization. But if you look at it objectively as an Organization created in 1945, and you ask yourself whether this Organization has adapted to the year 2003, the simple and honest answer is that it has not, and that may be part of the root cause of the problem that we face.

This is why we support the Secretary-General's proposals to set up an group of eminent persons, because we believe the time has come to take a comprehensive look at the Organization as a whole and to figure out how we can make sure that it survives the twenty-first century.

In the spirit of referring to other points made in the debate, I want to say here that I thought our colleague from Bangladesh made an important point when he said that the selection of the eminent person's group is important. I hope that it will not be based just on eminence, but also on ability to contribute meaningfully to the discussion.

Second point: what are the root causes of the lack of vitality of this General Assembly? When I was a facilitator, we focused on several procedure issues, such as electing the President earlier — and I am glad we succeeded in doing this — trimming the agenda and clustering items. But it is quite clear that from the discussions that we have had, including the informal discussions you hosted, Mr. President, that perhaps larger issues, and not purely procedure issues, are at stake when it comes to revitalizing the General Assembly. Let me just mention one example. In the informal consultations that we had, one distinguished ambassador said, if I remember his words correctly, that the fundamental problem is that the Security Council is sucking the oxygen away from the General Assembly. I would say that that is a fair description of what has happened in this House. But the question is, why has this happened? Why has the Security Council successfully sucked oxygen from the General Assembly?

Here, unfortunately, I have to bring up a word that is rarely used in this Hall but perhaps should be used more often, and this word, of course, is geopolitics. When I served here in the 1980s, the reason why this Hall was full and why everyone would come and listen to the debates is that the cold war was on. Two super-Powers were competing for influence in this room, and everyone was engaged.

Now the cold war has ended, the geopolitical situation has changed, and the Security Council has achieved its primacy. So in some ways the lack of vibrancy in this room is due not only to our actions inside it but also to the larger global forces that also flow through this Hall. We have to address the larger dimension.

Here I want to quote from a report which I hope will be read carefully in the context of the debate on revitalization — I am referring, of course, to the report (A/57/836) that was circulated by the Dutch Permanent Representative at our meeting at the Greentree Estate on 16 and 17 May 2003.

Regarding the challenges faced by the General Assembly, the report states:

> "The General Assembly faces two primary challenges that threaten its — and the United Nations — credibility and legitimacy as global arbiter and decision maker. The first, policy-level, challenge is the chronic, and increasingly acute, gap between issues of global import and relevance and the way they are addressed by the General Assembly. Since the early 1990s, it has been increasingly hamstrung by the inability of member States to situate the Assembly in the post-cold-war era." *(A/47/836, p. 3)*

I mention this because I think that we need to do a larger analysis if we are to figure out the root causes of why we have to revitalize the General Assembly.

Let me now turn to my third point, about the solutions. I want to make a very important and fundamental point. If we are looking for the real solutions to revitalize the General Assembly, we can do so only if we first have among ourselves — all 191 Member States — a clear common understanding of what the causes are of the situation that we are in

today. If we do not agree on the causes, we will not be able to find the solutions.

In my case, flowing from the remarks I made earlier about the root cause, I should like to suggest four possible elements for solutions.

The first element, as I said, is that, if geopolitics is the problem, then geopolitics has to be made part of the solution. Here, clearly, we in the General Assembly have to engage the major Powers of the day and make them feel that the General Assembly is an important instrument that should be strengthened rather than weakened.

Here, hopefully, I have one iittle bit of good news. As a result of globalization, we all are now sailing in the same boat. Now that we are sailing in the same boat, I think that the great Powers are also beginning to realize that if one just takes care of one's own cabin on the boat, one has not taken care of one's problems, because there are problems on the rest of the boat, and the problems in the other cabins are coming into one's own cabin.

There is now a new awareness among the major Powers that they have to, in a sense, find new solutions to the global problems of the day, and, if indeed that is the new attitude, then the General Assembly can play a major role for the major Powers of the day.

With respect to the second possible solution, I think that the time has come for the General Assembly to move away from a mechanical process of going through its agenda every year from September to December without asking itself, is this the real agenda that the world is focusing on?

Here let me just give me a simple example. On 2 September 2003, in document A/58/323, Secretary-General Kofi Annan described the dire situation of the United Nations. He noted, in paragraph 6, that "The very relevance of current multilateral rules and institutions has come into question". He further stated, in paragraph 13, that:

> "The United Nations finds itself at a critical juncture: unless the Security Council regains the confidence of States and of world public opinion, individual States will increasingly resort exclusively to their own national perceptions of emerging threats and to their own judgement on how best to address them."

These very strong statements were made by the Secretary-General in September this year. But if a survey were to be done of all the speeches and remarks made in this Hall since that day, one would find that very few of them refer to the issues of the day, and one would ask oneself, "Why has this happened?".

Clearly, we must in this Hall address real issues and not issues that have come up mechanically.

Thirdly, I would suggest that we need to change the corporate culture of this Hall, of the Committees and, indeed, of the whole House. Whenever we meet, we should stop delivering speeches in this Hall and should start talking to each other, referring to each other's speeches, and commenting on what other representatives say, in the hope of developing an understanding. I believe and hope that this can be done.

Fourthly, I also believe, as I mentioned in informal consultations, that each one of us must make a calculation of how we balance our national interests and our collective interests. What I said in informal consultations was that if our real goal is to promote the collective interests of humankind as a whole, then this means that each one of us will have to sacrifice a little bit of our national interests if we are to promote the collective interest. As I said, the collective interest is a collection of national interests minus X.

Again, I will give a simple example. The agenda of the General Assembly is creaking under — some say drowning in — the huge load of agenda items and resolutions that come up repetitively. But every time it is suggested that an agenda item be removed, or the non-repetition of a resolution, one country will say that it has a very important interest in that particular resolution.

If each one of us adds to the burden of the General Assembly and none of us lightens it, how can we revitalize the Assembly?

My final point — and these are points of detail on several issues that have been raised — is on the presidency. We need strong leadership from a strong President, and you, Sir, frankly, have provided it very well. I say that, I hope, objectively, because you are the first President to do a report on the debate on the report of the Security Council. Even though we had taken a decision several years ago to prepare such a report, no other President did it. This shows the difference that a good President can make.

While we are focused on important issues such as electing the President early, providing more resources to the President's Office — and these all are important issues — I hope that we will also sensitively and delicately address the core issue, which is the selection of the President of the General Assembly. We must find a way to ensure that this post is not seen — as, unfortunately, some countries view it — as a way of, in a sense, planting someone in a retirement post. This post should be seen as an important and dynamic post in which work is done. The principle of meritocracy, I hope, will applied to the selection of the President.

The second major theme that has come up so far is on the question of the budget, and here the usual North-South tensions have emerged. These tensions are, in some ways, inevitable. They are inevitable because, on the one hand, the major contributors feel that they should have more of a say in deciding how the United Nations spends its money, which seems like a very reasonable demand. But if you accept that principle, then you undermine the principle of sovereign equality on which the United Nations was founded. And if you undermine the principle of sovereign equality, you take away a major pillar of the United Nations. That is one dimension of the problem.

The other part of the problem is that, if you allow the countries that contribute very little to decide how much to spend, then effectively you are allowing the smallest countries to impose taxes on the bigger countries. You can do that for a while, but after a while they will stop. So what we need on all discussions of the budget — and this is not a financial question; this is a political question — is a new political compact between the major contributors and the other countries, which are the major stakeholders of the United Nations. We think it can be done and that it has to be done.

I would like to end on an optimistic rather than a pessimistic note, and my optimistic note is this. This Hall, even when it is quiet and empty and when it sometimes seems almost devoid of activity, controls one of the world's most valuable and precious resources. That resource is legitimacy. Indeed, if you want to legitimize any global action, only the Members seated in this Hall can do it. Frankly speaking, even the legitimacy that the Security Council enjoys is an offshoot of the legitimacy of the General Assembly, because if the General Assembly goes, then the Security Council will also go, because it cannot survive on its own. Its legitimacy comes from the fact that 191 Member States have ratified the Charter and have thus agreed to abide by its provisions. We believe that this legitimacy is a valuable commodity that can be harnessed and used to promote many good global causes; and if we, the Members in this Hall, find ways and means of harnessing this legitimacy, then I think we will truly revive the General Assembly.

Mr. Kirn (Slovenia): It is not difficult to agree with what the preceding speaker, Mr. Mahbubani, has just shared with us in his traditional manner of addressing this audience with very original and thought-provoking ideas. I myself also intend to raise three issues that deal not so much with concrete suggestions and substance — to which I will refer later — because I believe that we have an excellent paper before us. I would like briefly to raise some general issues to reflect what I suspect is a common concern expressed during our meetings yesterday and today.

Let me start by emphasizing that Slovenia fully associates itself with the statement made yesterday by Italy on behalf of the European Union and the acceding countries. In my national capacity and as a Vice-President of the General Assembly, I wish to address the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly in the context of broader United Nations reform.

My delegation shares the view that there is momentum for change and that we have to seize the opportunity. That is what I wish to talk about, sharing some thoughts with members. To my mind, at least three factors support the view that there is momentum for change.

First, a great majority of speakers, including heads of State or Government and foreign ministers, raised the need for United Nations reform during the general debate. A great many expressed political will in favour of United Nations reform. We see such views as representing the broad consensus among our leaders that emerged during the general debate. We now need to build on that consensus in our further deliberations, among ourselves and among different regional groups.

Secondly, as the President of Slovenia stated in his speech in the general debate (see A/58/PV.13), a number of good ideas and proposals relating to the revitalization and reform of the General Assembly have already been identified and have the support of the majority. Now we have to put them into practice.

The informal note on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly that you, Mr. President, have shared with us is an excellent starting point for a work plan on which I hope that we shall agree very soon. Your informal note was well received and supported during the open-ended informal consultations held on 17 October 2003, as well as during the General Assembly debate of yesterday and today.

On that basis, we believe that we can already move towards decision-making at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, as was also stated by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. In doing that, my delegation believes that we should keep everybody on board; we should be aware that everybody's view and contribution is extremely valuable and important.

May I add that, given the wide range of issues related to this process, our work should be organized on two tracks simultaneously: the first track, to deal with proposals and solutions related to improving the work of the General Assembly that are achievable and implementable over the short run; and the second track, to deal with proposals and solutions of a more structural nature, which may take more of our time and our patience. This work should complement the work of the panel of eminent personalities being established on the initiative of the Secretary-General.

Finally, to make this happen, we need leadership, and leadership is what we have: with the Secretary-General and his clear vision and his call for change; and with you, Mr. President, with your dedication and commitment and your stewardship of this transparent and inclusive process. Leadership and support are also needed on the part of all Permanent Representatives and their delegations to maintain the momentum of change and to bring about the tangible results we all desire.

Slovenia supports you, Mr. President, in your guidance and leadership, and we shall work with you closely.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Croatia strongly advocates the reform of the our Organization, especially with regard to the enlargement of the Security Council and the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Along those lines, we express our firm support for the ongoing efforts to enhance the authority of the General Assembly and to improve its working methods.

Croatia is of the opinion that the essential step towards that paramount goal would be to replace the approach oriented towards long debates with one that will produce tangible results. Against that background, I should like to emphasize the main points of Croatia's position on the subject of General Assembly reform. The General Assembly is the only principal United Nations organ in which every Member State has an equal opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. That well known but too often overlooked fact must be a main guiding principle of our work. Consequently, the working groups and panels charged with producing proposals for comprehensive reform should be composed in a way that reflects appropriate regional and subregional representation.

The collective interest of the Organization must prevail over attempts to safeguard national interests at any cost — and to the detriment of the efficiency and the quality of work of the General Assembly. Reform must benefit all Member States, especially those that lack the privilege of Security Council membership. No single national interest — regardless of the size of the Member State — should be allowed to derail reform.

The political authority of the General Assembly should be significantly strengthened, particularly as far as implementation of its resolutions is concerned. The role of sponsors — as well as their responsibility for actions stemming from a particular resolution — could be enhanced in that regard. Adopting resolutions that we are not prepared or able to implement will lead to the utter irrelevance of the General Assembly. Therefore, we must find a way to reverse the current practice, even if that requires amending the Charter.

We need not only shorter and more substance-oriented resolutions, but also concise statements and debates. In that regard, the idea of placing a time limit on statements — depending on the issue being debated — comes to mind, especially in cases in which a Member State has already aligned itself with a statement made on behalf of a particular organization or regional grouping.

Making the General Assembly agenda smaller in terms of the number of agenda items and clustering items along thematic lines would not mean that certain issues would lose their substance or merit. On the contrary, we must avoid the endless repetition of

certain resolutions year after year. In streamlining the agenda, we must respect the legitimate interests of Member States, particularly bearing in mind that many of them have no leverage on the work of the Security Council, and that the General Assembly therefore remains the principal body for the promotion of their goals.

In exploring ways to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, no stone should be left unturned, including the utilization of modern technologies. Word processing and other related technologies should not be misused for the proliferation of documents and paperwork, but should be synergized to make our work much simpler and more efficient.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that the project of revitalization of the General Assembly is as much a technical as it is a political exercise. It will require all our expertise, flexibility, pragmatism and understanding. Croatia stands ready to actively participate along all those lines.

Finally, let me express my strong support for the statement made earlier by the Permanent Representative of Singapore.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.